風波しのぎ
Kazamami Shinogi

THE NEW GATE

ザ・ニュー・ゲート

02.亡霊平原

アルファポリス

Chapter 1

Shin, who let the young fox sit quietly on top of his head, walked toward the town. After he told the fox "retract your claws back into your paws" repeatedly, the young fox finally settled down. The claws that struck his face until then caused him to stagger.

As a result of having followed the request of the orphanage girl, Millie, a massive amount of Skull Faces were defeated by Shin. And he saved the young fox from the Shinto shrine, which became a battlefield. The forest, after the battle ended, became full of noise from living things, unlike when he first came to the shrine.

Possibly when Shin headed toward the shrine, the group of Skull Faces were already approaching, and the animals went into hiding. But the crowd of Skull Faces were indeed too many for it to occur naturally.

The number of undead appearances popping from tombs or underground dungeon areas might be caused by hazardous swirling miasma. He sighed while advancing forward, because if he didn't report this, it would be bad.

First of all, how to conceal the Element Tail…while thinking about that, he called out to the young fox which was leisurely resting on top of his head.

"Hey, let's have a discussion."

"Kuu?"

The bark with question mark came from the young fox. From the communication a little while ago, it was already revealed that the young fox understood what Shin was saying.

"Because it is bad if your true identity was exposed, do you want to form a contract with me?"

The contract in this case was the partner contract that tamers make.

——Taming. Unlike the summoner who was able to make contracts with numerous summoned beasts without restriction, the tamer was able to do partner contracts only up to 5 per person. However, for other jobs than tamer, it was only possible to do partner contracts once. Even though, he could only contract once, he thought that it was satisfactory as a pet and as a little support personnel. Because Shin had a lot of support characters, he didn't need a monster partner. But Kashmir, the tamer and summoner of Rokuten, recommended it to him, which was half the reason Shin performed the contract.

Nevertheless. Shin never thought that it would be useful in such a situation.

"Although there is no bonus compensation because I am not a tamer…Your level and race won't be exposed to other guys, and we will able to communicate without the need of items, too."

In THE NEW GATE, when there was too much a difference in level and stats, the low-level players would not be able to see the higher level player's stats. And they must able to see the stats of the player who was the master, before being able to see a monster partner's stats. In other words, if Shin, who had overwhelming power in this world, formed a contract with the young fox, almost no one could see the stats of the young fox.

By the way, communication (telepathy) became possible between the master and monster partner. While it seemed silent when observed from the outside, the monster partner was given instructions via telepathy during a battle. This was how a tamer fought with their monster partner.

“Kuu!? Ku~Ku~!”

“Really!? I will do it!” as if it said that, the young fox unleashed its claws again. Shin somehow came to understand the young fox even before the contract.

“I understand! I understand so don’t move for a moment!”

He said as he held the young fox facing him while reciting the keywords together.

“I, wish to walk with thee.” “Ku一…”

The young fox answered to Shin’s words. In this case, the contract would be completed if the monster said “I, vow to be on thy side”. When the bark stopped, a tattoo in the shape of a falcon formed respectively on their left arm and left foreleg. This was the mark of the contract which the player created, it was intended to distinguish the difference between a common monster and a monster partner. The monster partner that was raised by a player was basically stronger than a common monster.

“Then, again, I hope to get along with you.”

“Kuu!!”

“Thank you!!” as if it said, the young fox raised its right foreleg and barked. It was a heartwarming scene that would make anyone smile.

“Now then, first thing to do after contracting.”

“Ku?”

“It is to decide your name. Because Element Tail is a race name. It is natural to think about a name for you when you became my partner, I guess?”

“Kuu!? Ku一Ku一!!”

“And it…calm down! Or I will shake my head!!”

“Really!? What is it!!” As if the fox said that. While calming down the excited young fox, Shin announced the name that popped in his head.

“Yuzuha, how about it?”

“Kukukuu…kuu!!”

The small bark from the young fox fell silent for a while, thinking about the name ‘Yuzuha’. And then it yipped with a noticeably loud and high-pitched “kuu!!”, as if it said that it was pleased with the name.

Rather than a male name, it was a female name that came to Shin’s mind. Because when the Kyuubi quest was accepted, the Element Tail most often appeared as a female figure to the players.

“Well, actually, there is no gender, but…”

The Element Tail was a monster that didn't have genders, it could become either man or woman and not be tied to either one. Even though it was usual that it appeared as a female figure before a player, he remembered that a male figure appeared very rarely in a walkthrough site. But he never actually saw it.

"Kuu?"

"Nothing. I guess you will become 'Yuzuto' when in male mode."

As in novels, manga, and anime, there was a story such as naked beautiful women appearing the next morning after hugging an animal in bed. He didn't know whether the Element Tail in this world would appear the same as in the game, but he prefer it to be a female figure anyway. It would be a nightmare for Shin if he woke up only to find that he was cuddling with another man, as he looking forward to an enjoyable sleep.

(My LUC is low. I hope the time when it becomes a person will never come.)

"Kuu?"

"There cannot be a strange good luck…" Shin muttered, and the young fox, Yuzuha, tilted its head. For some reason, he was acting strangely while feeling a little uneasiness, then he stopped thinking about it. Even if it's called an Element Tail, its body was still that of a young fox. Thinking about difficult things were not of his characteristic, as he was not good at it.

As usual, Shin's forehead was lightly hit by its paw that had retracted its claws. Moreover, its reaction was like "What happened?", called out to Shin. For a long time, to Yuzuha, who had endured poison and a curse, a trivial thing such as communication might be nothing but a joyful experience.

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"Hmm?"

As soon as he left the northern forest, a familiar electronic sound, "Pon!", was heard by Shin. It was the sound of level up, incoming email, event announcement, and so on, which he often heard in the game.

Judging from Yuzuha, who wasn't reacting, it seemed that it was heard only by Shin.

"Incoming message. From Tiera."

The semi-transparent letters 『You have a message』 at the edge of Shin's view became clear. The obvious unrealistic game characteristic, to Shin who already spent a few days in this world, brought the illusion that he was still inside the game.

"There is a feeling of something wrong because of this half-baked system."

Although he didn't feel odd obviously because having seen the game screen through the VR (Virtual Reality), when it happens in reality, the feeling of something wrong couldn't be shaken off. Is this the feeling when game and reality are mixed? Shin frowned, but it was certainly a convenient thing. He sighed as he had no choice but to get used to it, and opened the message.

『To Shin

When I tried it, I was able to send a message to master.

Though I don't know whether master has a message card or not, when the reply comes, I will contact you again.

P.S.

Is it possible to send items via the message card?』

Tiera, who was Schnee's acquaintance in this world, seemed to able to send the message card without any problems. Since Shin was not able to send the message card to Schnee himself, he didn't think about the possibility that Tiera could communicate with Schnee before.

"Well because she already contacted her, it's a good thing."

He convinced himself that it was alright while looking at an unused message card to reply as an attachment. The message card became drops of light and was sucked into the letter paper of the reply. It appeared to be possible to attach only light items, but it was satisfactory and convenient.

"…Is this happening because it's this world? The attaching items was not possible in the game."

The game and reality are not the same, and the inspection of other items was necessary, he made a mental note of this. There were unexpected things likely to occur in this world other than the game.

Given the number of items in his Item Box, it would require a considerable amount of time for the inspection. Shin, while thought about it, had a slight headache.

"If Schnee reply something, contact me immediately."

He replied to the message which included the method for item attachment, then he continued walking. He was heading towards the east gate of the town.

He decided to report about the army of nearly three digits worth of Skull Faces to the guild, and leave out Yuzuha from the report, even if he had to lie.

"Yo Shin. This time you brought something strange again."

It was Beid who called out by the east gate. There was no formality like when they met at the first time, probably because they encountered each other pretty much every day.

"This is my partner, Yuzuha. I would like to confirm something, when I take a monster partner with me, is there any restriction or something?"

Even if it was accompanied by a tamer, Shin expected that it would be difficult to just let a monster into the town.

"There are various restrictions in case of aggressive monsters or monsters that have huge body's, but there is no problem if it's that small, I guess. Just in case, I will have you to write the necessary document for preparation here for the time being. After that, your companion has to show the mark of your contract to complete the registration process."

"This is unexpectedly lenient."

Because he thought it would be strict, he was a little disappointed.

"Of course, it is strict when a guy appears to act violently and dangerous. In addition, a tamer must take all the responsibility if their monster partner causes some trouble. And be careful, because there are such guys who start fights on purpose, and demand a payment from the tamer."

"Ah, such guys exist too."

“Yes, unfortunately. Moreover, the monster partner was only aimed at when the tamer ability was restricted at that time. The regulations are difficult around there.”

“I’m thinking whether it is lenient or not…”

Because there were people who tried to catch and sell rare monsters, Shin understood Beid’s words of caution.

Just in case, counterattacking seemed to be permitted for the time being if he was going to arrest them with brute force. But the processing afterward seemed to be troublesome, “Do it thoroughly in a place where it won’t be found out if you do it” said Beid. He didn’t know whether it was fine for a guard to say that, but he understood about the monster partner and start of a fight, and since most of the criminals belonged to the monster’s trade organization, it was said that they didn’t need pardon.

“Name is Yuzuha, race is demon fox. The rest is…”

He wrote the necessary words on the document which Beid brought.

Demon fox was a race to which a type of fox monster belonged to, and there were many players who made it their pet in the game.

Element Tail was classified as a first class boss, and categorized as an ‘Element Tail’ race while at the same time being of the demon fox tribe. One could say that it was a higher kind, like High Human or High Elf.

So the race that Shin wrote in the document was not completely random. Though it was not the whole truth either.

“…Yosh, I have finished filling out the document. Please confirm it.”

“…Hmm. There aren’t any problems. Then, the registration of the contract mark is completed. Please touch with the arm and foreleg that have the contract mark on this.”

When Beid confirmed there was no discrepancy, he handed the document to another guard and held out a purple sphere with the size of a baseball.

Shin and Yuzuha touched the globe with their left arm and left foreleg respectively. Thereupon the globe slightly shined, and the contract mark with falcon design appeared inside the globe.

“The registration process has ended with this. And though I don’t want it to happen, in case your monster partner dies or has been kidnapped, there is the procedure of registration cancellation. Please remember it, just in case.”

“I understand. I hope it will not happen.”

He nodded to Beid’s detailed circumstance speech that turned a little businesslike, then Shin left the gate.

Since Yuzuha was sitting on top of his head, the passersby were glancing at Shin as he walked on the street without minding it. Because Shin already predicted it would become like that. Small children and the like, pointed “it’s fox-san” and Shin, were warned by their parents. Though it was not necessary to place the fox on his head, Shin judged that it might be a little dangerous if Yuzuha walked on the ground where there was a lot of pedestrian traffic. Of course, the one who clashed with Yuzuha would be the one in danger.

He endured the glances from the surrounding onlookers, and passed through beneath the signboard of the adventurers’ guild. Here, also without exception, Yuzuha, who resided on Shin’s head, was attracting glances.

There were the appearances of two miss receptionists who resembled each other like two peas in a pod. They were the twin sisters Celica and Cilica.

“Excuse me. I would like to report something.”

“I will receive it.”

Two people answered at the same time. The timing almost identical. Both were glancing at Yuzuha for a moment, but it was the feeling of mere confirmation rather than the eyes of curiosity.

“Well, errr, which one should I report to?”

“I will ——”

“Receive it!”

The one who interrupted elder sister Celica’s answer, was the younger sister Cilica. The diligent elder sister and the mischievous younger sister —— Shin right away judged from their hairstyle, and he didn’t seem to be mistaken about it.

“…Cilica”

“What?”

“Shin-sama came to me first, therefore I will receive it.”

“Eh, am I no good?”

“It’s no good, I will do it.”

“Somehow your mood is different than usual.”

“What’s different?”

“Yes yes, I understand. I will behave myself.”

In the end, Celica seemed to be declared as the winner. For Shin it didn’t matter which one he reported to, as it was all the same to him.

“…Uhm, the report?”

“Yes, sorry for the fuss. Your report please.”

“Today, near the center of the northern forest, I encountered a large amount of Skull Faces. I confirmed that I defeated all of those within my range, but because a stray monster might remain, I’m reporting it just in case.”

“A large amount…what do you mean by that?”

“I don’t know the exact number because I never counted them, but I think it was near 100 bodies.”

“Huh?…”

Nearly 100 Skull Faces bodies ——— There was the matter of the Jack class subjugation the other day too, so the remark of "I defeated them" caused a weak response from Celica, but as expected, it was not possible to hide her shock because of that large number.

"Don't tell me it is what I think it is, is it the same strong individual like the other day?"

"No, this time the ones I encountered didn't exceed the general knowledge of level and equipment. The class is a mixed of Jack and Pawn class, and they moved to surround a certain building."

"A building?"

"Yes. A Shinto shrine…it was a facility to worship a God."

Since he wasn't sure whether she would understand the words Shinto shrine, he roughly explain it.

"Shinto shrine…I have heard that there was such a thing in the Hinomoto country, but I didn't know that there was one in the northern forest."

It seemed to be the result of the barrier which prevented living things to come near. Furthermore, the barrier wasn't spread widely, so it was hard to notice.

"I was anxious when I heard the sound of something cracking as I approached, and at the same time the Skull Faces emerged. Perhaps a barrier or something was erected, I think."

"So did you find something?"

"Though there were a few things inside the building, something like a magic formation was drawn on the floor. That's all the features I can think of."

The matter of Yuzuha was concealed, in addition, he cited where the worrisome place was to others.

"Thank you for your report. Including the matter of the Jack class on the other day, I will investigate this one too. Besides, if you noticed anything else, please contact me again. I might not able to understand it if Shin-sama is not present."

"I understand. I will come again if I remember something else."

Then he shifted his attention to the bulletin board where the requests were pasted. When he took the request of Hillock Herb before, he only looked at the G rank requests. This time Shin looked over the large amount of requests which he couldn't take at his current rank. And then incidentally, he found that another bulletin board existed, hidden beside the main bulletin board.

Its size was about 30 cemels in length and width. It had a handmade feeling from the pasted on requests. And it couldn't be compared with the adjacent bulletin board.

Shin, who took a little fancy to it, took a look at the requests which were pasted in a disorderly manner. Then, he found a word that caught his eye in the request that was mixed with others. He took it in his hand and scanned it properly.

——— Requesting a skill successor.

——— The one who accepted this request, please contact the church's orphanage at east district.

——— Reward negotiable.

The contents of the request was seen, and Shin noticed that the request was not covered by rank.

There were requests that were not covered by rank, like the request related to criminals or the request from poor children that were put on the bulletin board, according to Cilica's explanation about the request.

If one asked why set up such things, the answer would be any person has the freedom to do requests.

"I have a feeling that this is a special circumstances request. That rumor is not necessarily a mistake, is it?"

Shin said while thinking about that. He recalled some of the information he collected while using the hearing skill. Though it was only a rumor, the content made him a little worried.

It was the connection between the guilds; especially the relation between the ones called as the underground guilds and the adventurers' guild. To be precise, the normal guilds, like the adventurers' guild or merchant guild, were accepted by the society, and the underground guilds undertook crimes such as assassination and kidnapping.

According to the rumor, the underground guilds were performing purges for the nobles and the like, such as forcing unreasonable demands and violent requests, and the normal guilds were said to overlook the crimes of these underground guilds. Though the truth was uncertain, it was not laughable matter if there was 'something'.

"Even if it's the orphanage. If I am not mistaken, it's the orphanage where Millie was."

He recalled what Wilhelm said before parting the other day. When Shin thought that there might be a relation with the girl who brought the opportunity for him to meet Yuzuha, it would leave a bad aftertaste if he left it as it was.

"…I should go and check."

Because originally Shin intended to ask Millie about Yuzuha, at the same time, he would listen to the contents of the request. Shin decided to head over to the orphanage.

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After he asked Celica how to get to the church from there, he walked for several minutes. Later, Shin was in front of the church.

Shin imagined it was a place of worship combined with stained glass when he heard about the church, and it was exactly as he imagined it. There was a big open door, worshipers who sat on the bench inside, and a ray of light that shined from the stained glass could be seen. The sun seemed to rise from the other side of the stained glass. The light, which shined into the little dim chapel like a halo, was indeed mysterious.

There were two sisters inside if the worshipers were excluded. No figure such as a pastor or priest could be seen.

(There are a few differences in the interior design, but this is certainly an architectural skill 『Church』.)

He thought about such things while looking around the chapel. Architectural skill was a skill necessary for constructing a building, just as its name implied.

Because he was brought up by Cain, who was both a magician and an architect of Rokuten, Shin's architectural skill level was raised to VI. Thanks to that, Shin understood a little bit about bad and good points in buildings.

He understood that the interior was old, but it was carefully taken care of. With that alone, he more or less knew the personality of the person managing the church.

“May I help you?”

“Hmm? Ah, sorry. This is my first time coming to this place.”

Shin was observing the church near the entrance. One of the sisters saw him and right away approached him. It was a young women with a dark eyes and chignon, light brown hair.

Though he came to the church, he was not praying and just standing near the entrance, which was quite suspicious. Yet, there was no wary tone from the sister toward Shin.

Because he didn’t have business with the church, he decided to ask about the orphanage.

“I have a business with the orphanage.”

“Are you the one who saw the request!”

The sister voiced an exaggerated surprise. There must be very few people who accepted the request she put on the bulletin board. Either that or she didn’t expect anyone to accept the request for her to be that surprised.

“Well, shall I listen to the story first? And then, is there a child beast named Millie in this orphanage? This young fox…Yuzuha, I want to confirm it with Millie.”

Shin said and pointed to Yuzuha above his head. Although the sister was staring in wonder at Yuzuha, whom she had just noticed, but she turned to Shin shortly after that while giving him a cautious look.

“That kid, what?”

“When I met her yesterday, I was interested in what she said to me. Besides, I want her to confirm a few things about Yuzuha and about the request at the same time.”

From the sister’s attitude, was there any special circumstances with Millie? While Shin thought about that, he lowered his voice so other people didn’t hear it.

“…Okay. Come this way, please. Sister Rashia, please take over here.”

After having slightly considered it, the sister who was cautious of Shin, left the place and prompted him to follow her after she entrusted the place to other sister.

When the sister went out through the door, he went around to the back of the church. There was an old building there. The building, which reminded him of an apartment, had traces of repairs in several places, but Shin didn’t pay attention to the shabby impression. This appeared to be the orphanage.

“Please wait here while I get Millie.”

He entered a place that was supposedly a reception office. When Shin sat on a sofa and looked around, the sister brought Millie shortly afterwards.

“…It’s Shin-nii”

Millie who was hiding behind the sister, ran to Shin and sat next to him when she found out that it was Shin who sat on the sofa.

"…It seems like you really aren't a bad guy after all."

The sister smiled and sat on a sofa in front of Shin.

"I'm embarrassed if I am suddenly being looked at by those kind eyes…"

"Fufu, I'm sorry. It's been a long time since Millie became attached to someone."

"Wilhelm said the same thing too. Oh, I am Shin. An adventurer."

"This time it seems that you have accepted Millie's request, thank you very much. I am Thoria Serias. I am in charge of management of the sisters in the church and the orphanage."

This sister seemed to be the person in charge. Shin, who didn't know about the personnel affair of the church in the meantime, was convinced.

"There is a little thing I want to confirm today. Hey Millie, when you said 'fox-san' yesterday, is it this fellow?"

"Yes, it is. Thank you."

"You're welcome. Yuzuha, say thanks too. It was all thanks to Millie that you were helped."

"Kuu!"

While patting Millie's head, Shin didn't forget to make Yuzuha said her gratitude. In fact, he didn't know what would have happened to Yuzuha if not for Millie's words.

Yuzuha got down to the floor and lowered its head, and after satisfied with Millie's confirmation, Shin turned to face toward the sister.

The sister, who was watching the exchange between Millie and Yuzuha, straightened her posture while smiling.

“There is one more thing I need to confirm. It’s about the request in the guild. Can I hear more details about it?”

“Yes. Because Shin-san looks like a person I can trust.”

Thoria nodded with serious face. After all, there seemed to be a reason, as it was a request outside the rank.

“Having read the request means Shin-san is a skill successor, right?”

“Well, you could say I am.”

Though it differed from the truth, Shin nodded as he didn’t want the talk to become confusing.

“The reason I’m looking for a skill successor is, though I think it is impudent, I want you to teach the skill if possible.”

Shin heard from Tiera that just having a skill could gain you preferential treatment, although it was said that a considerable amount of effort and money were necessary for the succession. Shin hadn’t seen it yet, but apparently there were degraded versions of skills which were called arts.

As the sister talked about the skill, several necessary skills appeared in Shin’s mind.

“After all, is it the【Heal】 and 【Cure】 system?”

“No, It’s different. Those are certainly necessary skills, but the circumstances are different this time.”

“Circumstances?”

Because they were necessary skills for the recovery job, could you teach me those? Shin thought the sister would say that, but it seemed to be different for some reason.

“Then, what is the skill that Thoria-san was looking for?”

“…Tion, it is.”

“I’m sorry, I didn’t hear it properly.”

“…【Purification】, it is.”

“Ahh, it is【Purification】.”

Thoria said as she was ready to give up, because she knew she was asking the impossible.

“I know this is absurd…”

“Because it is troublesome, right?”

“Yes troublesome…what?”

A few seconds after Shin’s remark, for the first time, Thoria noticed that Shin’s response was odd.

“Errr…what did you say just now?”

“No, it is troublesome. I said.”

Thoria was having a face trying to squeeze the words, in contrast to Shin who said what came to his mind.

“Erm, to acquire the skill, do you know it?”

“Yes, I know it.”

“…The request, can you accept it?…”

“It depends.”

Shin changed into a serious expression from those words.

Though Shin spoke in a thoughtless tone, he calmly analyzed the information in his head. He thought he understood something about Millie, but he didn’t have even a fragment of information about her. Instead, he got to know about the trouble in the church. In addition, he didn’t expect that the skill would be 【Purification】, but he daringly said that he had the information about 【Purification】. Although he had poor knowledge about this world, he wasn’t that foolish to teach the skill to the sister during their first meeting.

“I would like some time to think about the reward.”

“No, the monetary things are fine. Instead, there are some conditions.”

Conditions, Thoria stiffens by that word. As if she knew what Shin would say next.

“Conditions?”

“Yes, first of all, about Millie’s power. Subsequently, I want the information you obtained in the church, the term for the condition is one year. Finally, I want it to be a secret that I accepted this request. Even from the higher-ups in the church . Please say it was a volunteer service by me.”

The church was a place where various people regardless of age or sex gathered. There might be some information that came out before God, Shin thought. And since Thoria seemed like a good person, this type of conversation seemed to be unfamiliar to her.

Apart from that, Shin’s preference was about Millie’s power. It might be something like future foresight or crisis perception. Shin’s nature as a gamer spontaneously thought about it. That thought, if in his former world, would be laughed off.

“These conditions are the rewards I wish for.”

On the other hand, Thoria, who was asked, seemed to hesitate for what she should do.

From Thoria’s point of view, it was accompanied with a great risk to reveal Millie’s power to a person whom she didn’t know and who appeared suddenly. There was no conclusive proof that Shin wasn’t going to expose this story either.

In addition, she even had to defy the higher-up of the church in some cases. It couldn’t be helped but to say that the conditions were relentless in exchange for the 【Purification】 skill. To make matters worse, there was no evidence that Shin really knew the acquisition method of 【Purification】. And if Millie’s power

was known to someone powerful and greedy, Millie herself would be in danger. It was not an agreement that she could consent to thoughtlessly.

Silence filled the reception room.

Shin was waiting for an answer and Thoria was keeping quiet.

"…It's alright."

It was Millie's words who broke the silence between the two people.

It's alright. Millie said while looking at Thoria. Her eyes were not the eyes of a young child, they harboured mysterious glows.

"Millie?"

"If it is Shin-nii, it's alright."

"……"

Though Thoria still kept silent considering it, having made up her mind after looking at Millie's appearance, she opened her mouth slowly and nodded.

"I understand. I accept the conditions. However, even though you might say information, we are amateurs. I don't know whether we can be helpful by investigating or doing something for you."

"You don't have to act strangely. You can inform me if someone comes to the church and says something worrisome. The real nature of Millie's power is more important to me."

Shin explained that she didn't need to imitate the information seller. It would be dangerous if it was done unskillfully. He urged that the power of Millie was by far the main issue.

"…Millie has had the title 『Hoshiyomi』 since birth. From Millie's story, the scenery abruptly differentiates from her normal view. Actually, nothing Millie has said was wrong as long as one did not do something. I think the reason why she requested Shin-san is because she saw something with that power."

" 『Hoshiyomi』? For Millie to have such power…"

"Yes…Do you know something about it? As for this title, even I don't know much about it. And title holders are fewer than skill successors, since they almost never exposed their ability. I only know it from Millie's story."

Hmm, Shin pondered.

『Hoshiyomi』 was originally a title which could be obtained from a quest with a simple hint. It was a rare title, but it was not something to be worried about.

When Shin was there Millie's power, which Thoria told him about, didn't manifest. There might be certain conditions, but it didn't come to Shin's mind at all. Although there were no powers in THE NEW GATE that Shin didn't know about.

Possibly it might have become the clue as to how to return to his original world.

(Not only the message card, there is a change even in the title, too? Though it was not useless to try to understand it, the title is hard to confirm because it cannot be activated voluntarily. The 『Hoshiyomi』 effect for future foresight is not certain either.)

Titles in particular were divided between random activation type and regular activation type.『Hoshiyomi』was occasionally activated when a quest was generated, so it was in the middle between the two types.

Then――

“Kidnapping, abduction, confinement. It was too scary if Millie’s power was found out. People who thought about such dangerous things are likely to appear. What about this side?”

Only worrisome words had appeared in his mind. The lighter tone probably comes from his past experiences.

By the way, this time he talked close to Millie’s ear.

“I will tell the person concerned not to talk about it carelessly, so it won’t spread easily. That person is someone who left here and become an adventurer, he will cooperates with me.”

“Is it Wilhelm?”

“Yes, there are others, but he is the best for protection. The people who want to put their hands on the children here are almost all gone because of their fear of his ability.”

That small children were likely to be the target of evil deeds didn’t seem to change anywhere.

Although Wilhelm was feared by the adventurers, it seemed that Wilhelm was not a bad person, Shin thought. He protected the orphanage by gaining fame, whether it was good or bad.

Even though the drawback was that there was the possibility that someone had a grudge against Wilhelm and would therefore target the orphanage, somehow other adventurers would do something about it. Since there were not many things he could do alone.

“Then, because I received the reward, I want to formally accept the request. Is it agreeable with Thoria-san to acquire the 【Purification】?”

“No, It’s not for me to acquire, I want to request it for Rashia. You saw another sister in the church, right? That girl, please teach it to her.”

“Is that so? I certainly thought it was Thoria-san in this case.”

“That girl is the grandchild to a person who served as a priest here. Because if the plan goes smoothly, the church will be handed over to her by inheritance.”

Apparently, there seemed to be some circumstances other than the 【Purification】. Shin had a wry smile while stroking Yuzuha, as it was likely to turn into a complicated development.

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A minute discussion with the person concerned was proposed by Thoria and Shin accepted, he would have to wait in the orphanage until the church closed. It was understandable because she couldn’t afford to neglect her work. Furthermore, he intended to keep the children company, too.

“Fox!?”

“It’s fox-san!”

“I want to hold it!”

“Me too!”

“Kuu~…”

The children of the orphanage were interested in Yuzuha.

Though it was bad for it to be made into a toy, he asked Yuzuha to put up with it this time. Shin intended to join in if he saw the opportunity.

In contrast to Yuzuha, the children didn’t approach Shin at all. Only Millie was near Shin.

“Although it is understandable, what is this feeling of defeat…”

“…Don’t give up?”

The consolation caused his eyes to sting.

“…Well, to be attached to a guy who suddenly came and had a conversation is unreasonable, huh?”

As for the children, their wariness was strong. They would not trust him, no matter how much he was introduced by Thoria. All the more to the orphans who had lost their parents or siblings.

“Millie doesn’t want to join in?”

“I lose.”

“Lose what?”

“Yeah…”

Though a somewhat unexpected answer came back, the point was that she was defeated by a stronger opponent.

Millie remained anxious on whether or not to jump into the group that surrounded Yuzuha.

When he thought about that, Yuzuha was not able to endure anymore. It slipped through between the children, rushed to Shin and climbed up to on top of his head. Its fur was somehow bristled up, as if it was being cautious.

“Yuu-chan, come.”

“…Kuu.”

When Millie called, after pausing a little while, Yuzuha barked and settled itself into Millie’s arms.

Yuzuha’s wariness seemed to have faded compared to when it met them the first time. And its nickname seemed to be Yuu-chan.

“With this, only I hold it.”

“What a schemer!?”

“Without effort, victory.”

“You are saying something like that!?”

She seemed to have foreseen that Yuzuha would not be able to endure it and would run away.

“Millie, you’re a frightening girl!!”

Shin retorted. In the middle of such an exchange, from a distance, the children started to look at Shin.

Now a relatively serious girl, who appeared to be the oldest, stood before Shin as he thought ‘What’s up with that?’ There seemed to be courage in this girl. She might be a child in an elder sister position because she said, “Hey boy!” And she was not one of the children who had gathered around Yuzuha.

The girl had evenly cut, grey hair that extended down to her shoulders. If the children who gathered around Yuzuha were around lower grade elementary school students, this girl looked like an upper grade junior high school student. Her green eyes were tense, with an -ask something- look.

“…Hello.”

“Hello. You might already have heard it from Thoria, but I am Shin. I am an adventurer. Nice to meet you.”

“Kua, it is. Nice to meet you, too.”

To make sure, he introduced himself again. Was it the result of her being fearless? She introduced herself without feeling pressured.

“By the way, this fox is Yuzuha. Please excuse my partner from too much whisker and tail pulling.”

“Are you the person who came to help us?”

“Hmm? What do you mean?”

Shin would understand if she said, “person who came to help the Sisters”, but what about the remark “us”?

“Because the Sister told us that the place here might be lost.”

“The church will be lost?”

“No, only the orphanage.”

“Only the orphanage?”

Shin, who thought the church and the orphanage were a set, was surprised at Kua’s words.

What will happen to all the children who live here if the orphanage is lost? From Kua’s perspective, it was not a nice premonition

“May I hear the story for the time being? I don’t really know the details.”

“…I understand.”

Was Shin’s determination transmitted? Kua began to speak calmly.

And, he understood several things from Kua’s story.

First, the management of this church was not entrusted to someone unless they were a priest with a certain extent of ability, and Thoria didn't meet the qualifications. The priest, in this case, referred to a job. Father and sister were similar to the priest job, they just differed in name.

Second, when one couldn't meet the qualification as it was, another priest would take over the management here. Apparently, the man who was the next candidate would demolish the orphanage. It was really doubtful whether the man was a real Priest or not.

Third, a relative of the former manager. In the case of identical qualification holders, the relative would be put in a higher priority for the succession order. And this was the reason Thoria pushed it to the other Sister, Rashia. If Rashia succeeded this church, the current problem would be solved.

Shin, who didn't think that the child was well-informed about the circumstances, was a little surprised while he heard the story.

"Even so, why is that Priest not going to keep the orphanage, even though it's the same church?"

Judging from the actions of Thoria and Rashia, the church was an independent organization that helped other people.

However, the next candidate Priest's actions were strange in this situation.

"We hate that person."

"What kind of person is he?"

The children behind her were nodding at Kua's words.

He asked what kind of person he was, yet Shin was somehow able to predict Kua's answer.

"That pig is blinded by money."

"…Ah, yes. Just that alone is enough."

When a child said an abusive remark, one could imagine what kind of person that man was.

Though he understood that it was rash to judge only from one viewpoint, it was unreasonable in this state of affair.

By all means, there were always corrupt members somewhere in an organization. Shin had a distant look.

"In other words, the acquisition of 【Purification】 is required so that Rashia can take over the church?"

As Els from the guild said, 【Purification】 was a skill, a very special one for a priest.

"Because Shin-nii will help, it will be all right."

"It can't be asserted with only this."

He warned Millie who was full of confidence in herself.

This time he intended to teach by the original method without using the secret book. In this case, if the person in question didn't make any effort, it would not have much effect, even with Shin's help.

He didn’t want to use 【Secret Books Creation】, because he didn’t know what kind of significance 【Secret Books Creation】 had in this world. Besides, he wanted Rashia to get used to fighting scenes.

From Kua’s story, he didn’t think that the problem of the church would be solved just by acquiring the 【Purification】skill. In 9 out of 10 cases, the predicament was that it would become a fighting scene. Although it was likely to end when Wilhelm started to rampage.

“But, if Millie-chan said so, I wonder if it’s really all right?”

Kua muttered and Shin asked about it.

“Is what Millie says always right on the money?”

“Yes, although she seldom tells me something about when the shop is cheap or where the sweets are put away.”

“No, wait, that is something different.”

Shin worried about Millie for being seen as weird because of her good intuition, but the unexpected reply about food came back.

“Weird?”

Millie looked up at Shin.

“No, it is not weird. But it’s rather a good thing…?”

Because he thought he should cover the one he should conceal, he questioned if it might be good.

He felt that she had a grown-up mentality, which Shin thought might be caused by 『Hoshiyomi』, as she had seen various things with that power.

“Well, it’s good if you don’t overdo it.”

He said while patting Millie’s head.

Initially Millie showed a face of wondering, but she looked comfortable after being patted.

“Being patted, love it.”

Afterwards, there were children of the beast race that looked enviously at Millie, who seemed very comfortable.

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They played together for several hours while Millie broke the ice with the other children. By the time Thoria returned to the orphanage, all of the younger children and some of the older ones were inside their dreams, leaving the other children behind.

“When I see the children sleeping…”

The words she was about to say stopped. It seemed that Thoria’s strength came from seeing the children who slept peacefully. As one might expect, she would hesitate to have Shin, whom she just met today, take care of the children.

"…these children seem to be completely off guard, too."

"That's right, and it's nice to see."

There was the figure of the girl called Rashia in the church behind Thoria. She had gray hair and the same chignon as Thoria. From her brown eyes, Shin could perceive the same tension as Kua had not long ago.

"Is that Rashia-san?"

"Ye-yes! This time I hope to get along with zu…iyai"

It appeared that she bit her tongue.

"Uhm, are you alright?"

"Though she has a little careless side to her, I can assure you she will do her best."

This was followed by Thoria who showed a little bitter smile.

"Uu, I'm sorry. It was an unsightly scene."

"Well, let's be at ease. I'm Shin. An Adventurer. I will instruct you in how to learn the skill 【Purification】. However, whether it can be mastered is up to Rashia-san. Don't forget that."

"Yes!!"

She returned an answer clearly this time. Those eyes showed earnestness itself.

"Then, let's move on to the finer details. First of all, I want to ask you two; Do you know of a place where undead monsters with high levels appear in large quantities? If not, I will check with the guild."

There were essential conditions for the acquisition of 【Purification】. Generally, how long it took for acquiring it would depend on the place.

"I think the famous one is 'Wraith Plains'."

"Wraith Plains?"

Shin looked puzzled at the name of the place that came out from Thoria's mouth, as he had never heard of it before.

"Yes. After you leave the country, the plains are located in the north. Originally, there seemed to have been a dungeon there, but a part of it rose above the ground due to the former natural disasters."

"A dungeon is above ground? Is there such a thing?"

"I heard that there are other, similar cases, but the details are…"

"Well, since this time the task requires undead monsters, I'd say it's perfect."

In this case, he felt it was too timely, but decided to not to worry about it. He was saved the trouble of looking for such place one by one. He didn't seem to have much time according to the story he heard. It would be better to start early, Shin thought.

"So, how long do you need to travel to arrive there?"

“You can expect ——”

“5 or 6 days by carriage.”

“…Ara, Will, did you just return?”

The one who interrupted Thoria’s words was Wilhelm, who had shown up at the entrance. He was carrying Venom in his hand, and was quietly raising his fighting spirit.

“Yo, I’m interfering.”

“Are you the adventurer who responded to the request?”

Though Wilhelm seemed calm on the surface, Shin knew that Wilhelm was openly prepared for battle.

“That’s correct, since I have received the rewards, I don’t mind teaching 【Purification】.

“…What did you hear?”

Wilhelm saw through Shin’s answer that the reward was not some kind of money or goods. His eyes were saying ‘I will not forgive a lie.’

Shin took a short pause and replied.

“…Millie’s title, and what kind of power she has. Afterwards, the talk of to make sure the information didn’t leak with the adventurers of orphanage alumni.

“Is it okay to put this much trust in him?”

The words were directed to Thoria.

“It’s okay. I don’t see him as a bad person. Besides, Millie also assured it. That it was all right.”

Wilhelm, who knew Millie’s power, was like “No way!” as he looked at Millie.

“…Did you see it…?”

“Yeah.”

“…I see.”

Millie’s word rendered him silent momentarily, and respond with a few words. He seemed to agree for the time being.

“Ah, did you settle the dispute?”

“Yes, since Millie said so, I will trust you for now.”

Shin could do nothing but shrug his shoulders to that reaction.

“I never thought of spreading what I heard, abusing Millie’s power or anything like that.”

“Indeed. If someone dares to do such things, I will kill that guy.”

Wilhelm told the joke while waving Venom, but his eyes were completely serious. There was a hint that the spear could be sent flying anytime.

“Mu~, quarrel, cannot!”

“Oops.”

“Uu”

Millie, who sensed the tense atmosphere, sweetly interrupted it. Wilhelm, who appeared to not be in a mood to press any further, let go of his fighting spirit.

“I’m sorry, I’ve never been a patient person.”

“Will doesn’t have the habit of patience.”

“Impatience Will-nii.”

Thoria and Rashia followed up casually. It seemed like it was more to criticize than to follow up.

“They told you…”

“You bastard…”

Shin had a hunch that if an ordinary man felt his fighting spirit, they would be completely frightened, yet Thoria and Rashia still remained calm despite being commoners.

“Well it’s fine. From the various things I’ve heard, in this case, they will receive information about 【Purification】, huh?”

“Just in case, keep it a secret from others.”

“Don’t worry. The information is about the church’s secret, it would be dangerous if someone were to talk about it.”

Others were nodding to Wilhelm’s remark. Apparently. Shin thought the church had a large influence.

“Did you put up the eavesdrop prevention magic just to make sure?…Well then, the main subject. The acquisition method for 【Purification】 is to defeat at least 200 undead monsters whose levels are higher than 150, while having the item called 【Prayer of Saint Sphere】. Because it only counts the decisive blow that defeats the enemy, I will weaken the monsters first so that Rashia can defeat them.”

“…Oi, is it true, seriously?”

“I’m serious. The truth is, obtaining the 【Prayer of Saint Sphere】 is really difficult, but it’s okay this time, because I have it.”

Shin talked about it like it was nothing.

Though he didn’t realize it, monsters whose level exceeds 150 were very dangerous existences to an ordinary person of this world. Rashia, who heard that she was required to defeat at least 200 monsters, was dumbfounded like her soul froze.

“Oi, Rashia!”

“Hahi!!”

“Oioi, are you alright?…”

Wilhelm tapped her shoulder and Rashia returned to her sanity. Besides, Rashia had no other option but to persevere.

“Oi Shin. I will also go together with you this time.”

“Yes, it does not matter, but she might be more at ease if she had someone with her whom she knows.”

If they were only 2 people, he guessed it would be severe. Shin who considered Rashia’s mental state.

Although he saw Rashia’s reaction, even if it was an adventurer in this world, it would be difficult to clear the trial Shin talked about. Shin thought he himself was prudent, but he unconsciously based it on the standard from the game era.

“Then, Rashia, try your best.”

“Yes, I will do my best!”

While Shin was thinking, Rashia somehow appeared to have recovered, too. Since she held responsibility for the church, she had to get over this.

After Rashia settled on her resolution, the discussion of minor things came to an end.

While it’s better to move quickly, the preparation time for each person was considered. The meeting place was decided to be in front of the east gate.

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After Shin left the church, the others started preparing for tomorrow. Rashia and Thoria explained to the children while preparing for the journey.

Wilhelm had gone out to purchase the necessary food and goods for the long journey.

He called out to trusted adventurers who were orphanage alumni, while at the same time, walking along the main street to buy the necessary things. It was because the Priest who tried to demolish the orphanage was not likely to make a move if someone was there.

Even if it was the adventurers from the orphanage, the people who knew about Millie’s power were limited. He had to convey all members to be on the lookout, since there was the possibility of a long time absence. While busy, Wilhelm kept thinking about a certain man.

Needless to say, it was Shin.

He met him for the first time in his favorite restaurant and shared a table by chance. Though Shin just became an adventurer, Wilhelm was surprised that Shin was talking to him without fear, despite him having Venom. Thus he was able to recall him immediately when they met again in the orphanage.

He heard that Thoria talked about Millie’s power with Shin in the church, and thought that no matter how he looked at it, Shin was being trusted too much, but he consented for the time being since Millie asserted that it was all right. Moreover, Millie said “I saw it”. Somehow, though he couldn’t say so himself, at least he was sure that Shin was not a dangerous person. Otherwise, he didn’t think that Millie would support Shin.

However, it didn't change the fact that he didn't know Shin's true character.

If he thought about it carefully, he noticed that there were many odd things or spots. Especially the remark "Did you appraise it?", and when he asked about the appraiser's skill level, too.

Now that he thought about it, Shin's expression at that time was like saying, "Then it is impossible".

And then the 【Purification】 acquisition requirement. Shin said "defeat at least 200 undead monsters whose levels are higher than 150". And then afterwards, he continued with "I will weaken the monsters so that Rashia can deal the finishing blow." Judging from the way Shin talked, it didn't seem that Wilhelm was included in the combat capability.

If what he said was not a lie, then that means that he has the ability to defeat opponents of Lv. 150 or more by himself. In addition to that, he was able to take Rashia along, who would be a burden in that situation.

(Did he really just become an adventurer?)

When they shared a table, he sounded like he had some battle experience before he became an adventurer, and it was not strange if the information for his skill was circulated. But no such information were found, even when Wilhelm asked the information dealer of the orphanage connection.

To be able to defeat monsters level 150 or more, the rank of adventurer would be at least B or higher. It would not be unusual if it was in the case of rank A.

What kind of person was he, that he was unknown until now?

(Possibly, that guy…)

He unintentionally stopped walking.

Words appeared in Wilhelm's mind. Certain words that only a few people know.

Words that indicated the existence of a power that was not conceivable within the common society.

A person who had kept a lot of skills and knowledge, and deviated from the concept of level in this society, a 'Chosen One' as its generic term. Furthermore, Wilhelm had a deep connection with a Chosen One himself.

"A Chosen One…huh?"

Wilhelm's spontaneous muttering was not heard by anyone, as it disappeared in the clamor of the town.

At dawn the next day.

Shin quickly finished his breakfast, and told Tsugumi that he wanted to check out of the room since he would be out for a long time. The remainder of the inn fee, which he had paid in advance, was received. Because all of the baggage was put inside the Item Box, he didn't need packing and was able to leave without spending too much time. It was because Tsugumi didn't want to let go of Yuzuha that he couldn't depart immediately. Shin felt that it was the movement of a hunter who had found their prey. After all, was it because of the family name 'Bear'? Shin guessed so.

As usual, Yuzuha rode on his head while he walked down the road where the pedestrian traffic was sparse. He arrived at the east gate at the appointed place at an earlier time than usual, probably because it was not crowded like it was in the daytime. Though Shin thought he was a little early, there was already a waiting member there.

“Yo.”

“Good morning, you are early.”

Shin replied, while feeling a little surprised that it was Wilhelm who came early and was waiting.

The way to know the time in this town was to hear the sound of the bell which basically rang at regular intervals. It was difficult to match the meeting perfectly, so either one would have to wait. The merchants were an exception because they have their own clocks, but adventurers were unexpectedly poor when it came to timing. Tsugumi and Douma said that rushing at the last moment was not unusual.

There were still 20 min before the appointed time. Shin understood that thanks to the game system. Somehow, he regretted that he went out too early.

“Are you always this early?”

“No, I just want to confirm one thing before departing. Just follow me for a moment.”

Shin was at a loss at Wilhelm’s frightfully serious look. He followed after Wilhelm while thinking, “What’s the matter?”. Yuzuha was still relaxing on top of Shin’s head. It didn’t seem to feel the danger in particular.

“Come to think of, where is Rashia?”

“She was asked for a trivial errand. She will be late.”

It looked like he didn’t want to be asked by Shin about Rashia somehow.

They began to walk for several minutes. Wilhelm stopped in front of a certain shop.

It looked like a restaurant judging from the signboard. The signboard had a glass and a spoon combined drawn on it.

After knocking on the door three times at fixed intervals, Wilhelm opened the door. The inside of the shop was dim, but the brightness was kept at a level where it was not inconvenient to walk. Three tables, five counters seats and a bottle of sake were displayed in an orderly manner inside the shop as they entered his sight. And then, a bartender polishing a glass.

It appeared that this shop was like a bar.

“Sorry. I’m going to borrow this place.”

“……”

The bartender nodded at Wilhelm’s words, opened the back door and left the shop. He should have noticed Yuzuha, but didn’t say anything. Shin thought on whether animals were going to be declined due to hygiene, but it seemed to not be a worry about in this world. He might have thought that Shin was a tamer in this case.

“Someone you know?”

“It’s one of the orphanage connections. Didn’t you hear about such fellows from Thoria?”

“Oh. The bartender from a while ago is an adventurer?”

“Something like that.”

The two of them were chatting while standing, before sitting on a seat in front of the counter.

Then, Wilhelm suddenly began to talk.

“I want to confirm one thing. Are you a Chosen One?”

“…What, is that?”

Shin asked back as he had never heard of those words in his memory, while tilting his head. The reason for his slight pause was due to him trying to search his memory for that title by the name. However, there was no title called the ‘Chosen One’ as far as Shin knew.

“You don’t know?”

“No, not in the least.”

“……”

Wilhelm observed Shin’s state after he replied, and began to talk calmly after a short time.

“A chosen one has skills and titles since birth, and they have knowledge that is not supposed to be known. The person himself has strength not conceivable for their level.”

“Since birth? You don’t say! Did the baby talk or fire some magic?”

From Wilhelm’s speech, Shin imagined the mysterious phenomenon of a baby being able to talk due to a restart from reincarnation, which he read about occasionally in web novels.

“I’ve never heard of such a story. Instead, there are numerous stories, such as a boy with a single digit age killing a Tetra Grizzly with his bare hands, or suddenly being able to use a secret skill.”

“A person strong since birth, huh? How should I say, like normally being branded as a monster.”

Though the ability was influenced since birth, it was strange to acquire skills and knowledge from the beginning. Though it depends on the point of view, the dwellers of this world surely have said such thing to a chosen one.

“With all of that knowledge, does the Chosen One have the memories from their previous life?”

“No, mostly item and monster knowledge, but the story of a fellow who remembered their past life is unheard of.”

“I see.”

While hearing Wilhelm talk, one possibility popped up in Shin’s mind.

(Several skills can be used from the beginning, has a title, and the ability is high…could it be, the reincarnation system is still functioning?)

Originally the reincarnation was conducted in the temple inside THE NEW GATE, so a start over for a baby inside this reality world was not that strange. He couldn’t deny that there was the possibility that he would be born normally in some family if it could happen.

It depended on the reincarnation frequency, but there were a lot of reincarnation benefits, such as titles and skills inheritance, bonus stats, and so on. Shin thought that this possibility was the highest if he overlooked some of the contradictions.

However, the place where the temple was became a danger zone because of the monsters, so it was hard to enter now, and the confirmation seemed to be difficult.

“Do you happen to know about it?”

“Yes or rather no.”

Shin was at loss for that answer.

He himself had reincarnated too, but that was the story in the game, and one was not reborn as a baby like in this world. But the ability of Shin might only be explainable as the chosen one to the humans in this world. In addition, it was not possible to make an excuse that his abilities were high because he was some long life species, since Shin stuck to being a human in the guild.

He didn’t know whether Wilhelm would believe him if he spoke honestly, and even if Wilhelm believed it, Shin would be in trouble. Since High Humans were supposed to have gone extinct.

“It’s dull…well whatever, I don’t have any reason to make you spit out everything. I wouldn’t want to say either, I guess.”

“I am relieved when you said so.”

“Because you seem to not be aware of it. But to take on a level 150 alone is what an advanced level adventurer does. It seems thoughtless when it comes from you, a rank G.”

“Now that you mention it, that’s right. No, thoughtlessly!!”

Oops, Shin let out a wry smile while scratching his head. In this world, where level became the evaluation standard, Shin’s judgment of the importance of stats might be unconventional. Though he roughly understood just in case, it was already found out.

Shin had a little flashy reaction, and his mind was not calm. Even though he intended to be careful when he saw the reaction of Rashia for 【Purification】, he had done it again. However, it was not long ago since Shin came to this world, so he didn’t completely understand the way this world worked. In a sense, it was a severe world compared to the time of the game. It was not possible, even if he already spent a few days, to adapt to the sense of values and common sense.

“A Chosen One’s given name is not known by many people either, since trouble would follow around when their ability was exposed. It’s better to be safe than sorry.”

“…That…might already too late.”

“Oi, did you do something?”

“I guess that I might have had a match with the guild master and won, reported that I defeated a Skull Face which had the level of a King class, and even defeated a near three-digit amount of Skull Faces, where Pawn and Jack classes were combined…alone.”

“…Oi, that’s too ridiculous to respond too. What is this, these insanely strong topics?”

“It can’t be helped I guess. Even I didn’t expect all of this stuff to have happened. Or rather, it’s not that I voluntarily invite myself into trouble.”

Certainly it was Shin who approached the unique monster Skull Face, but the introduction letter of Tsuki no Hokora was the cause of the fight with Barlux, and even the near three digits amount of Skull Faces appeared when he was just saving Yuzuha. Shin insisted that it was not his fault. Especially the Skull Face, where he couldn’t just choose to leave it alone.

“Good grief, although something makes me feel that this is not a joke. Be careful, seriously. The Chosen Ones tend to be respected for their ability. But from what you said just now, it’s like you were treated as a taboo child.”

“That’s only natural, I think.”

“There was also this guy who prattled that he descended from an oracle…actually, the ability’s strength might be restricted while growing up, as there are fair differences from the environment. Well you might say, most chosen ones are protecting the church or the country so it isn’t a serious problem up until there.”

“Is that so? Even if I feel worried about it, but how many of the chosen ones are in the different countries?”

If the chosen ones were the existences that experienced the reincarnation as Shin thought, the person might be able to destroy a country in some cases. It was the number that he was worried about.

“It depends on the country. If you accept published information, there are 4 chosen ones in this country, including the guild master. Generally, there is 1 person in the neighboring countries. In each countries power relationship, there is a considerable difference in individuals, as for the power of the chosen one, some fellows only specialize in combat, and they are said to be the superior ones. Even if Bayreuth is at the top in ability for battle, the neighboring countries will form an alliance and oppose Bayreuth if they conducts tyranny. No matter how powerful a chosen one is, they can’t wipe out an army alone. Even if after they used their secret weapon. So now, balance is maintained. Well, there is also an unspoken agreement that all countries will conceal their chosen ones, too.”

“The countries won’t show their trump cards, huh? Even so, it is difficult for the chosen ones to annihilate an army. By the way, how much power does the strongest person have?”

“As far as I know, the strongest is the second princess, well the second princess, if in melee, the first princess if in magic. For the first princess, her magic could cover a wide range of 1000 enemies, but somehow she is ‘out’ if approached. The second princess depends on physical strength and strategy to defeat the enemy. Even if there are multiple combat specialized chosen ones, there is a considerable difference in the individual strength of their abilities, the combination of Bayreuth’s princess is excellent.”

Shin calculated the abilities of the chosen ones while listening to Wilhelm’s words. Since ordinary soldiers didn’t have the benefit from the reincarnation system, their stats would not reach 300, even if they were max level. Of course the limit was not dependant on the abilities of the equipment, but still, only a few stats would reach 300.

When he thought about it, since human was another race that had high magic resistance, the INT of the first princess who was able to take on 1000 opponents would exceed 500, and even her MP would be quite large. It was extraordinary in this world to be able to use several magic attacks at once. And then the second princess who paired with her, probably had high HP, and one of STR, VIT, AGI values was near 500. He couldn’t help but smile wryly as he divided the warrior type and magician type splendidly.

“It’s somewhat easy to understand. In a sense, the duo princesses are unrivaled as a set, huh?”

The first princess defeated the enemy with magic, the second princess defeated the enemy who approached them. He had the feeling that the success in battle would rise if both of them came, as it would be interesting to a match with a thousand.

“That’s right. No matter how many combinations are made, it’s those two people after all. If similar chosen ones appear and compete, the victory or defeat will be decided by the difference between the ordinary soldiers. Because all countries also have a similar condition, it’s the reason why they cannot easily reveal their hand.”

“I see.”

In other words, the chosen ones with ability probably didn’t have much of a difference in stats. Though there was no conclusive evidence, Shin’s definition of the chosen ones was that they had the stats of reincarnated people, which were around 500.

A justifiable request would come to Schnee, Shin thought. All her stats exceeded 800. He didn’t know what weapon she was using now, but with added compensation, her STR would be close to 900.

If Shin used the wide area magic he had learned before, he could annihilate not just 1000 but 10,000 enemies in a single horse ride. It’s easy to imagine the neighboring countries being annexed in a flash, if he served the country.

(Come to think of it, neither Els nor Celica-san asked me about the chosen one.)

Because they were guild staff, he thought that they would know about it. However, going from Wilhelm’s speech, there was the possibility that only the high-ranking staff and adventurers were informed about it. Well, they were likely to forget since the impression of dispelling Tiera’s curse and the Skull Face subjugation were too strong.

“Thank you for the advice. Although it’s too late, I will be careful.”

“Please do so.”

“Even so, it’s nice that Wilhelm is unexpectedly taking care of me. Is it really true that you are feared?”

Shin talked about what he felt. Shin sensed an unusual gap between the impression that he heard about and the impression he got when he actually met Wilhelm.

“That is because the surrounding people just think as they please, I guess. Even I don’t understand it.”

“But you are protecting the orphanage, right?”

“Other fellows are just not enthusiastic. Even when the Father was about to kick the bucket, that greedy pig guy was still meddling in the church. Because of that, the brats were crying. And a brat’s cry is harsh on my ears.”

Wilhelm said, while grimacing. However, it was probably because of a sense of incongruity he had acquired a long time ago that he felt irritated in the situation where a child was crying. Or otherwise, Shin guessed.

“So, did you silence the guy who tried to meddle?”

“Just that. Recently, I think the brats came up with strange ideas. A kid should be a kid, they should run, sleep, and eat without worries.”

(Darn, this person is a good guy.)

Shin thought, when Wilhelm talked bluntly.

In other words, a child should act like an innocent child and Wilhelm would not forgive the guy who was letting them cry. The title of 'big brother' suited him really well.

"Good gracious! You are not being honest aren't you?"

It was so amusing that Shin unintentionally smirked.

"Aaah?"

"Sorry, it's nothing. By the way, I am little worried, is it a good if I intervene in the inheritance of the church when that pig guy can use 【Purification】?"

He tightened his face to show his worries. Though the opponent was not to be liked, he shouldn't be underestimated if he acquired the 【Purification】 by himself. A pig that was able to fight was not just a plain pig.

"It is damn annoying, but that pig indeed possess 【Purification】. But that scoundrel's fighting power is like, to be frank, a small fry. The method you mentioned yesterday is impossible for him. It was not possible with his level."

"Do you know his specific level?"

"I heard it was 40."

"It is indeed impossible. Then, it is from 【Secret Books Creation】 huh?"

As expected, it seemed that he acquired that skill from an item. Otherwise, it was impossible for such a low-level to learn 【Purification】. A reincarnation person ― A chosen one in this world ― Though it was possible, from Wilhelm's way of speaking, it was different from Shin's thought.

"The church has secrets, one way or another. Even if there are such things, it is improper. More like, it was clearly unpleasant. The high-ranking priest at the headquarters' seem to be a skill successor from a conversation I heard."

"But even then, why is it that fat guy was let loose, is there not an eye for people? Is it the power of money?…It is the latter no matter how much I think about it."

Certainly, for a leader's position, there is no way that people could turn a blind eye. Besides, after thinking various things, money was indeed one of the comprehensible power.

"At first, I thought you were one of that scoundrel's underling."

"Is that so?, Come to think of it, isn't it strange?"

An adventurer with 【Purification】 skill turns up with this timing. It was impossible not to doubt Shin without Millie. All the more, she know the circumstances.

If there was no Millie, he didn't know what would happen.

"Millie too, on her own accords, was seen talking to other people about something. I was thinking about what kind of relation they have."

“Really? What kind of people does Millie talk to?”

“Are you interested?”

“Millie approached me as well.”

“That’s right… I cannot say in detail, but it was a black dragon, a pixie with blond hair, and an elf with silver hair.”

“Right.”

While Shin was lightly replying with an agreeing response, he suddenly had an idea one of the descriptions.

(Black dragon, blond hair pixie, silver hair elf…it was a feature I heard somewhere. No, this combination itself is not that rare. However, one of the three people seems familiar.)

Though it was insufficient details for a person, “Is it that person?” question appeared in his head.

“Hey, for the last silver hair elf, is it Schnee Raizar?”

“Huh? Why do you think so?”

“Intuition…I cannot say, but I just have a hunch.”

“Intuition, huh?”

Shin look straight into Wilhelm’s eyes.

“May I hear what Millie said to the elf at that time?”

“…‘Soon, coming back’. I don’t understand what she meant by that.”

“I see.”

“Do you know anything about it?”

“No, I don’t know.”

“You don’t know, even though your face looks convinced?”

“That I cannot say too.”

Still Shin who wasn’t able to say it himself, was surprised at Wilhelm who unexpectedly informed him of the contents of the conversation. By some chance, Millie already expected Shin to come here.

“Well. Hmm?”

“You have to tell me next time no matter what.”

“Sorry, please wait for a moment.”

A message suddenly started blinking on the edge of his view. It seemed like a message from Tiera.

He told Wilhelm to wait, and opened the message.

『To Shin

The reply from Master arrived.

For some reason, I was asked a lot of questions, so I only answered what I knew.

She will return home in a great hurry, as soon as her work has ended.

In case you are leaving Bayreuth, please let me know.

P.S.

There were a lot of questions and I was a little scared, what on earth did you do to Master?』

"……"

The amount of questions became too scary, he thought while sending a consent message. Whether it was the result of became worried after 500 years of no news, Shin decided to meet first to make sure so there was no problem when they were traveling together.

In the place where he about to close the menu screen while having a bitter smile, he noticed that the column of 『Important Things』 was flashing. He opened to see the 『Tsuki no Hokora Letter of Introduction』 shining silver.

"Hmm? …Ah!"

Shin thought about why it was shining, and the time when he met Barlux suddenly crossed his mind. It was said that the letters of introduction of Tsuki no Hokora resonated with each other with magic and was how one knew whether it was a genuine thing.

"That means…"

He took out the letter of introduction which in this state was formed into card. Because he didn't know what design to appear, he covered it by hand to prevent it from being seen just in case.

The letter of introduction emitted silver light in the state which formed into card.

"This is…"

"Oi, don't tell me, do you have the letter of introduction of Tsuki no Hokora?"

What? Wilhelm asked what Shin was about to say.

Then Shin noticed and asked back.

For that a letter of introduction to emit light, that means ――

"You too, do you have it?"

"The letter of introduction shined after all!"

Wilhelm took out a piece of card from the open space with surprise look on his face. Similar to Shin's, Wilhelm's card emitted silver light.

"…that is, no way!"

"…It surely is."

Shin and Wilhelm look at each other.

An indescribable atmosphere filled the place.

◆◆◆◆

The two of them regained their composure after a while and materialized the card. They then properly confirmed that it were the genuine things.

"So you really are a letter of introduction holder."

"I guess we both are."

Wilhelm showed a little weariness while Shin returned it with a wry smile.

Even with Millie's mediation, he was wary of Shin…Wilhelm was still cautious of Shin's ability even with the assumption that 'Millie's power wouldn't be abused'. Though Wilhelm's outward appearance was no problem, there was a little distrust remaining in the corner of his mind. Then both of the letters of introduction in their hand vanished.

"There is nothing more reliable than this. That explains why you know about Schnee Raizar."

"In my case, I got it from Tiera. Did you get it from Schnee?"

"I got it after I received hellish training from her. But I was beaten up one-sidedly even if it was training."

"Ah…She is still that serious, huh?"

Even though it was Shin who set the character, he only decided the personality aspect roughly at the last moment. When he heard Wilhelm's story, he thought that she had hardly changed. Although he was prepared, it would not be strange if Schnee differed from the game era in various ways. She originally had a fixed character, like all AI's, but it didn't mean that she had not acquired something, so her personality was nothing more than his impression of her at this point.

"Well then, stop slacking and let's go meet Rashia. We can continue this while we walk."

"Is it that time already?"

Wilhelm looked at the clock on the wall, and stood up. He didn't mean to stay for a long time, but it took longer than he thought because of the unexpected situation where Shin had a letter of introduction. But it was worth the time since he was satisfied with the result.

While each one of the letter of introduction holders had their own special ability, almost none of the holders has caused anyone else to have a character breakdown. Wilhelm probably felt that Shin would cause trouble for the church in one go if that wasn't the case.

"Even if I know we can trust each other, from what I heard, Wilhelm is a Chosen One too, right?"

"I don't have the intention to hide it at this time, but why do you think so? Not all adventurers with a rank A are Chosen Ones, you know?"

"No, it was from the weapon you hold, because an ordinary person would not be able to equip that. Therefore, when I saw you holding Venom normally, I thought 'Ahh, so he isn't an ordinary guy'."

“Huh? So that’s the reason. No wonder you desperately asked the skill level of the appraiser. You bastard, acting like you didn’t know about from the beginning.”

It was Wilhelm’s 《Legend》 grade devil spear 『Venom』.

This was an item that couldn’t be equipped if the player’s STR didn’t exceed 500. When Shin met Wilhelm for the first time, he had reasons as to why he looked toward the weapon, too.

Basically, for any equipment of the《Legend》 grade, they required specific stats to exceed about 350 in order to it be equipped. If he thought about it, the stat requirements for 『Venom』 were abnormally high. But it was not necessarily a bug, because there was a reason for it.

“I couldn’t just talk about it in front of so many people. And a while ago, when you took out a card from an empty space, did you use an Item Box? I heard there are very few people who have one.”

“Oh, so you actually saw my little trick, huh? I used an item called, 『Expansion Kit』, it has the capacity of an Item Box imitation…so it looked like I’m using the real deal. But that doesn’t mean that every Chosen One has one.”

“Heh, is that so?”

Shin thought that the function remained after all, as he responded with agreeing words. It has the function to give a support character and/or a monster partner the ability to hold a large quantity of items, and players eventually expanded it until it almost had the same capacity as an Item Box. A lot of players used one or two 『Expansion Kit』 to make sure their support characters were able to carry items, this way the support characters were able to use recovery items themselves in the case of an emergency.

In Shin’s case, all of his support characters were expanded to the limit. There was no particular reason for this. It was just his obsession about it.

“That aside, it seems that you also used an Item Box.”

“In my case, I was able to use it from the beginning.”

“You are a Chosen One after all.”

“Hmm… for now, that’s fine I guess.”

Because Wilhelm seemed to be convinced that Shin was a Chosen One without asking for a detailed explanation, Shin gave up and said it was fine for now. Since it was troublesome to think about the setting in detail, and contradictions might appear somewhere, he decided to pass as a Chosen One on this occasion.

While continuing the conversation, they returned back to the appointed place. When the two returned to the east gate, Rashia was looking around restlessly.

“Hey! Hey Will. I was forced to go shopping, where have you been?!”

“Sorry, sorry. I had some business to take care of.”

“When you say things like that, I hope you didn’t go to that indecent shop again.”

“Go to that shop!? Are you still half-asleep?”

“Shin-san. Please don’t follow Wilhelm even if he invites you. Good grief…you will have a painful experience.”

“I can hear your conversation! Saying such things will lead to misunderstandings!!”

“Calm down both of you.”

Shin calmed the couple who had started some kind of lover’s quarrel, and departed immediately. Secretly, he was a little envious of their relationship, where they were able to freely dispute without reservations.

The means of transportation this time was to use horses. Wilhelm seemed to have borrowed them from the guild. The two horses had remarkable bodies and a splendid chestnut color, so that even Shin, who was an amateur about horses, understood it.

The moment it saw Yuzuha, who was laying on top of Shin’s head, the horse’s movements stopped. Yuzuha let out a small “Kuu” bark, and the horse replied with a small “Hururu” neigh, and became quiet. For some reason, Shin didn’t understand the exchange of words that was being carried out.

Wilhelm and Rashia were on one of the horses, while Shin and Yuzuha rode the other one. Though it was the first time Shin was riding a real horse, somehow the 【Riding】 skill compensated for that, so he didn’t have any problems riding it. Since he had the opportunity to ride not only horses but various monsters, including griffins and dragons, in the game, the skill level was up considerably.

It would take 5 or 6 days by a carriages’ slow speed, but it seemed like they would arrive quicker at the current speed, Shin thought. Of course, Shin could run much faster than this, but didn’t talk about it because he would’ve had to carry Rashia, who was an ordinary person.

They advanced without any problems, while letting the horses rest along the way. There were 2 Item Box holders, so there was almost no luggage, and they were able to gain more distance because of that. In addition, because they could take with them various utensils, they didn’t have to eat dull preserved foods during camping. Because she could enjoy the meal which was one of the hardest things on a journey, Rahsia who was inexperienced in a travel didn’t seem to be affected.

While traveling by horse for 4 days, they deepened their friendship to the extent that they could speak in a casual tone. Shin and his group arrived at the region that was called the Wraith Plains before noon.

Nevertheless, the plains region was gloomy despite the sun hanging high in the sky. It was as if there was an invisible wall in the gap between the forest and the plains since the sunlight was blocked. When they looked at it closely, there was a deep violet haze slowly rising from the earth’s surface, like it was welling up. It wrapped the plains zone like a boundary line.

Since nothing was displayed by 【Analyze】 when he used it, there seemed to be no effect that would be causing an abnormal state.

“There is no reaction even when I touch it, huh? It doesn’t seem like a mistake that the border line is here.”

“Yes, that’s right. It is said that the monsters won’t chase you if you leave from inside this place. They are forbidden from leaving, as if they are being restricted inside there.”

“Is that so?”

“It happened once. There is no mistake about it, their equipment were tattered in an instant, even if it was daytime.”

“Just escape outside in case of an emergency, huh?”

Since Rashia was there, the escape route was secured in case of an unexpected situation. It would be different if it was only Shin and Wilhelm, but they had to keep the dangerous monsters away from Rashia from now on.

“For the time being, let’s prepare our base so that we can take shelter if we succeed in escaping. And this is the【Prayer of Saint Sphere】. It will be useless if you don’t have this. And then, this is extra. This will repel even a dragon’s breath.”

“U-understood! Thank…hyai…”

As expected, Rashia appeared to be nervous and felt the cold that drifted from the Wraith Plains. Though she had always snapped at Wilhelm during the journey, it was probably Rashia’s own way to relax.

What Shin handed over together with the【Prayer of Saint Sphere】 was a magic item of the bracelet type. It has the effect to nullify damage under a certain value and reduce the damage if above said certain value. Because it was one of Shin’s handmade items, one would be unperturbed even if hit by a King class Skull Face. It’s durability was guaranteed too. Therefore, though it could be said that the tension was unnecessary, there was no other way but to give it to Rashia, who was not used to fighting scenes.

By the way, Rashia’s casual tone toward Wilhelm was due to them being childhood friends, so there was no need for them to act reserved.

“(I entrust her to you, Yuzuha)”

“Kuu”

He talked to Yuzuha, who was on top of his head, via telepathy. Previously it became possible to use telepathy shortly after he entered the country. It was discovered that the words Shin thought in his mind would be transmitted to Yuzuha. Some simple emotions, beside simple thoughts such as approval, refusal and so forth, were transmitted from Yuzuha in return.

Yuzuha, who received the telepathy, got off Shin’s head, and then rubbed its face on Rashia’s cheeks after it jumped onto her shoulder.

“J-Just a moment Yuu-chan! That tickles.”

“Kuu~”

“Full of spirit, aren’t you?”

“Ah…Yuu-chan, thank you.”

“Kuu!”

Whether or not she had cheered up a little, a somewhat awkward but understandable smile was expressed on Rashia’s face. While Shin was transmitting a feeling of gratitude toward Yuzuha, who moved according to his expectations, Wilhelm emerged from the thickets.

“Wilhelm, how about the base location?”

“I have set up the tent in the vicinity as told, but that, what is that?”

Wilhelm pointed with his eyes toward the forest ahead. Though it wasn’t seen from the place where Shin was, there was a jewel with a diameter of around 10 cemels that enclosed all sides of the tent. Even if the monsters couldn’t come out anyway, the tent was set up a certain distance from the plains for caution’s sake.

“That is just a trifling interception item. When a monster approaches, it will attack with magic. Because it was possible to put up with a barrier where the monsters couldn’t go in, it’s satisfactory for a simple base.

“I have never heard of such an item!”

Shin would normally only erect a 【Barrier】, but he thought that he would be doubted again, no matter how much of a Chosen One he was. Therefore, he decided to use an item for interception. Although he understood that a Chosen One was outside of the norm, there was a limit for that, so it would be bad to show a power beyond it. He was worried about his uncertainty of that limit.

While he was at it, he didn’t forget to put up 【Wall】, since the danger was not necessarily comprised of only monsters.

“You are a Chosen One too, Wilhelm, so you have no choice but to consent.”

“Don’t use that name for your own convenience, man.”

“What? Shin-san is a Chosen One, too!?”

Apparently, Rashia seemed to know about Chosen Ones somehow. She probably heard it from Wilhelm.

“Eh? You didn’t tell her that yet?”

“I missed the timing.”

Wilhelm smiled wryly.

“Did you two perhaps confirm it on the day of departure?”

“Something like that.”

“Then you should have said it from the beginning!”

Rashia pouted when she thought she had been excluded.

“I thought you could guess it even if I hadn’t told you. If Shin was not strong enough, he wouldn’t have proposed this harsh requirement, understand?”

“But Will, you said you wanted to do it too, so I thought it was normal.”

“Absolutely not!”

Wilhelm was a little astounded by Rashia, who said so while looking doubtful.

“B-But even if you say Chosen One, the only one I know is Will. I know Will is strong, but I don’t know how strong you are.”

Even if she knew about the existence of Chosen Ones, if she didn’t actually witness their power, she was not likely to understand their true significance. In the first place, no one would be able to bring Rashia to this place, even if Wilhelm put in some serious effort; it was too much. It could be said that it couldn’t be helped.

“Oi~, I know it’s bad interrupting you guys, but let’s start soon. We don’t have time for leisure either.”

Shin who was contemplating the two people, lightly called out to them.

“That’s a good idea. Let’s go then. I feel a little bit better now.”

“What? Eh! Wait a moment!”

Because he understood that Wilhelm was trying to loosen Rashia’s tension, Shin picked the right time. In addition, they could continue happily.

“Now then, I wonder which one of these creeps will appear first.”

“Since it is daytime, it might be a Skull Face, a Bio Hound or a Mad Zombie. These monsters are more abundant while the sun is up.”

“When you think about the level range, the right time is at night, right? Well, now is a good time to get her some experience before the real deal starts at night.”

“The rest will depend on Rashia…well then, they are appearing already.”

They appeared in front of Rashia who was trembling while holding her staff. Shin and Wilhelm shifted their gazes to the shadows that approached them. Their view was limited to a degree due to the haze, but it wasn’t a problem for the perception ability of these two people.

What appeared from the haze were 2 Jack class Skull Faces and 3 Bio Hounds. After seeing that half of the Bio Hounds’ bodies was rotting, Rashia covered her mouth with her hand. It was hard to look straight at it, even for Shin, as it became too realistic to some degree.

“This is so-so for a warm-up battle.”

“That Bio Hounds’ smell is awful.”

Shin drew his katana from his waist and Wilhelm prepared with『Venom』. While Rashia’s resolution would be decided here, she held her staff while having a slightly bad complexion and began to chant.

The Bio Hounds moved first, at a rate of speed that seemed slow to Shin.

Shin stepped forward before the 3 of them leaped at him straight on, which was probably because of their lack of intelligence. With one hand facing toward them, he invoked magic system skill 【Ichiyou no Misogi】

At the same time, a semi-transparent barrier was created in front of him. The charging Bio Hounds crashed into the barrier and a crushing sound was made as they fell to the ground.

In magic system skill, a lot of the skills were effective against undead monsters, and the one he used was a skill for defense. The HP of the Bio Hounds, who were basically conducting the act of suicide, instantly went down to the red zone as a result of the anti-undead skill. And then, without Shin missing it, the barrier was released and at the same time, he gave instructions to Rashia.

“Attack the Bio Hounds!”

“Yes!”

Rashia immediately reacted to Shin’s instructions and completed her chanting.

White light emitted from the staff she held and shined upon the Bio Hounds. It was the magic system art 【Heal】. Though it was not as powerful as the magic system skill, the recovery magic was effective in damaging undead monsters as well. The remaining HP disappeared, and the bodies of the Bio Hounds disappeared.

Seeing that, Shin confirmed that the rule of monsters not leaving a corpse behind in a dungeon was applied even now. Apparently, the whole area of the Wraith Plains was regarded as a dungeon.

“The next ones are coming!”

From Wilhelms words, they prepared for the next attack. Similar to Bio Hounds, the 2 Skull Faces charged straight forward while the sound of armor scraping together was reverberating. However, they were prepared with a shield in front of them.

“【Shield Bash】, huh?”

Then Wilhelm called out the muttering Shin.

“Oi, can your barrier also stop their blow?”

“Leave it to me. And cut their arms and legs so that they can’t counter-attack once you have the chance! Or I guess that you can’t do it?”

“Ha! Who the hell do you think I am!?”

Wilhelm said confidently, and again Shin invoked 【Ichiyou no Misogi】. The Skull Faces crashed into the barrier which was deployed, but there was no damage because they used a shield unlike the Bio Hounds. However the Skull Faces, who probably didn’t think the 【Shield Bash】 would be defended against, greatly broke their posture. Shin removed the barrier right after he confirmed that the Skull Faces’ charge was stopped, and Wilhelm with the devil spear, instantaneously stepped forward between the two Skull Faces and jumped.

“SoRyAa!”

While drawing a big arc in the air, he used the spearmanship system martial arts skill, 【Spark Blossom】

A single blow that hit both legs of the two Skull Faces and shattered them into pieces.

And the attack didn’t end there.

Without changing his momentum, Wilhelm rotated once with his spear. The Skull Face on the right side had its sword and shield blown away by the centrifugal force. The Skull Faces which had lost both feet and weapon fell down to the ground.

“It’s done!”

Shin, who released the barrier, had already crushed both arms of the Skull Face on the left side with the sword system martial art skill 【Blade Breaker】, while watching the movements of Wilhelm. He held a new katana in his hand.

It was a katana with a crimson red blade named 『Red Chidori[1]』. The katana’s cutting ability had a lighting attribute, it was a 《Legend》 grade katana that easily surpassed the durability of 『Several Strokes』 he used before.

The Skull Faces only had a head and torso left, and no significant damage was dealt to its core. But its HP was shaved vigorously whenever the scarlet electric shock ran from the blade of the katana. The additional damage from the lighting attribute occurred because of the weak electric shocks that ran through the

[1]千鳥(chidori) literally means one thousand birds, usually for lighting related power.[Sasuke’s favorite move in “Naruto”

monster's body, and its HP could be shaved without directly hitting its core. It was effective against a monster that couldn't be damaged in other parts except for its core, such as a Skull Face. That was one of the reasons that Shin chose to use 『Red Chidori』, too.

"Rashia! Heal this fellow in front of me!!"

"Y-Yes!!"

As Wilhelm came into view, he instructed Rashia to finish her chant.

While restraining the Skull Face which tried to struggle despite only having a head and torso, Wilhelm extended the perception sense beyond the his view. He could not check visually because of the haze, but he sensed multiple presences heading toward them with 【Sign Perception】, which were probably drawn in by the combat sounds.

"More will come. Please be quick."

"It's impossible to go any faster!!"

As might be expected, it seemed to take time for Rashia's art to reduce the Skull Face's HP since they had more than a 100 level difference.

"That【Heal】art won't do, huh? Oi Shin! Can we attack from inside the barrier now?"

"That is not possible. Even if it's possible, I don't know how."

It would be convenient if they could attack from inside the barrier as Wilhelm said, but the barrier skill completely blocked the inside and outside of the deployed barrier. Therefore, the way of attacking one-sidedly was unusable. However, there was a possibility to be able to do it in this world which was somewhat adaptable, unlike in the game. And in this case, it was not possible for Shin to understand the barrier skill in such a short amount of time.

“Damn, it can’t be helped. It’s faster to beat the hell out of them, huh?”

“It’s not our goal to defeat them, but we don’t have a choice.”

“Wait a moment! Though we are in desperate situation right now, why are you two still composed like that!?”

The unexpected trouble stopped the plan of holding the enemies down, though it was understandable. Even though there would be not much composure when an ordinary adventurer did something like that, the speech that leaked from the mouth of the two people was “It’s annoying to do that.”, although not audible. As for these kinds of things, they maintained a moderate tension while preparing their weapons, although there was a complaint from Rashia toward those two people.

“The monster’s level is not high right here since we are on the edge of the plains.”

“We don’t know whether it’s necessary to advance a little deeper, right? Let’s wait a while until Rashia becomes a little stronger.”

“From the beginning, 10 level rises are quick. Just now it’s 24, because the level of the Bio Hounds is about 60. After that, it became 40 in one go. It is easier to raise the level when there is a level difference of 100 or more.”

Though there was the complaint of “Hey, are you fucking kidding me!!” from Wilhelm, Shin ignored it as he couldn’t spend time waiting for months.

With a loud voice, Rashia continued to chant 【Heal】 although she was trembling, which could be said to be cruel. Because it was natural for an ordinary person to be running away or have an absent-minded reaction in such a situation. Even if she was protected, a single blow from such a monster from an opening under their very noses would kill her. Accordingly for Rashia, she wasn’t constantly exposed to the fear of death at all. For a person who didn’t make a living out of fighting, they would feel a sense of fear far above what an adventurer felt. If mental stress was measured in a numerical value, it would probably hit an abnormal value.

“But Wilhelm, looks like her willpower has reached its limits. Her MP ―― magic power is running out, huh? After all, the Bio Hounds are difficult to defeat all of a sudden.”

Shin abruptly express the word MP in different words as magic power. He had heard the word magic power occasionally, but never heard the word MP which he noticed at the last moment.

“They’re damn grotesque than I expected. It’s a good thing that she didn’t faint.”

Fortunately(or unfortunately), Wilhelm didn’t seem to notice.

“If Rashia falls here, we will have come for nothing. Let’s take a break now while I drive them away.”

“Let’s do that! Even if her level rises without pausing, her magic power isn’t restoring either.”

Still, because the attack in the first match failed, they decided to temporarily go back to their base.

In the game, when a level rises, all the stats would be restored, but somehow it seems to be different in this world. He planned on using the restoration from the level up, but his expectations fell through.

(The restoration here is not yet complete, that is bad. If it’s not possible to restore it by leveling, I need to be careful of the MP amount remaining.)

Since he couldn’t depend too much on potions, he couldn’t do anything but go with a natural recovery. Shin thought about revising the plan in the future while cutting down a monster, because it was likely to take more time than he thought.

Chapter 2

After repelling the group that was approaching, they temporarily went outside the plains zone and took a break.

Although Rashia was mentally tired as a result of power leveling, it was also possible to say that her vitality and magic power were in the best condition.

“Uu, I thought I was going to die.”

“We managed to hold on though.”

“That’s not it, I think the Bio Hound is very formidable for a commoner. Especially its appearance.”

Shin also joined Wilhelm in teasing.

“Please don’t make me remember~”

She remembered the monster dragging its internal organs while approaching. Rashia’s shoulders quivered as she glared at the two people. Although one might say, there was not a bit of threatening language.

“That reminds me, was that the first time you fought that monster?”

“It’s not about the experience, though I am surprised! More than that, it was the rapid leveling up that scared me!

“That was expected since there is too much of a level difference with these monsters. Perhaps you will be around level 150 when you acquire 【Purification】.”

Rashia was a human without reincarnation so her level rising was kind of interesting. Her level would probably become near to Wilhelm. Though their fighting power was as different as heaven and earth, in the first place their role was also different, so it could not be compared.

“While that may be true, my body feels light and is overflowing with magic. Yet I am a little worried that my body has become so different.”

“Normally the level goes up little by little. You shouldn’t even feel a damn thing as it happens.”

“There is no way but to get used to this. Well, though it’s bad for you to attack a weakened enemy, this is for you to use, Rashia.”

Shin said that while taking out the secret book of 【Heal】 and 【Cure】. He understood that from the battle earlier, 【Heal】 art was similar to the【Heal】 skill, but its effect was fairly weak. According to Tiera, it had 1/3 of the skill effect, but he thought that it be lower depending on the user. The damage dealt was too low, though it be might due to the level differences. In fact, Rashia raised her level without stopping, so she was about level 40[2]. However, she still couldn’t defeat several dying Bio Hounds, so it was too inefficient.

[2] It was level 40 in WN and 70 in LN

Due to such circumstances, he thought he had better teach her these skills. Since it was not a combat system skill, he didn't have to worry about it getting misused.

"What is that?"

"This is a secret book. A skill, corresponding to its content, will be yours when you use it. It has 【Heal】 and 【Cure】 this time."

"Eh! The skills will be mine?!…I cannot accept such an expensive thing!? How much money do you think I have!?"

Rashia shook both of her hands in front her face. What kind of skill for a commoner? Her reaction was clearly understandable.

It was known that anyone could learn a skill by using a massive amount of money, so Shin's words were misunderstood.

"I don't need any compensation if you keep it a secret. I was originally going to teach you anyways. If you have these skills, you will be able to help those suffering, too."

"And then? What's up with this stinkin' speech, tell me your true intentions!"

Shin tried to say lines that were out of character, but it seemed to be too suspicious somehow. Wilhelm's eyes said "Don't try to lie to me!".

"Arts will get you nowhere. With this, we can speed up."

"You are such a pain!!"

"What a wonderful rebuttal. But you should know better than me how weak the arts are, right? Even with the level difference, it is taking too much time since she needs to defeat 200 monsters. We can't leave the orphanage to just Thoria-san for days, and that pig guy might start something while we are here."

It became hard to argue with Shin when he mentioned the orphanage. There was no disadvantage since he knew that inefficiency was the problem. And he was certain that both 【Heal】 and 【Cure】 were useful to the church.

For Shin, those skills were for a beginner who had just began to play the game, to the extent that he felt that it was just petty help. Honestly, it might be somewhat out of this world's common sense, but he thought about spreading it on a large scale only if the source was hidden.

Needless to say, the main reason he wanted to hurry was because there might be something bad happening while they were away. The absence of Wilhelm, who had the biggest combat capability, was a good opportunity for the opponent.

"I understand. I will accept your offer."

"Do that."

Rashia opened the secret book with a timid look. As she started to scan it, as with Tiera when she learned 【Analyze】, a green light enveloped Rashia and faded after a while.

"How is it?"

"Ah, yes. Certainly I understand how to use them."

“Doesn’t she need to read it before learning it?”

“I heard that the method of learning is that it enters your mind.”

Shin replied to Wilhelm who was stretching his neck from side to side to look.

“It’s true, but it’s difficult to explain with words.”

Rashia mumbled with deep emotion while staring at the secret book she held.

“Well then, shall we go again?”

“Yeah.”

Shin got up from sitting, and was followed by Wilhelm.

“U-Understood.”

Rashia, who was originally not tired, began to move immediately too. A Pawn class Skull Face and a Bio Hound approached them as soon as they entered the field, and partly because her level had gone up, the effect of 【Heal】 was demonstrated in an interesting way.

The gloomy aura of the Bio Hound slowly faded with the Art, but dissipated instantly with the Skill, like how smoke was blown away by the wind. Shin didn’t have to weaken it, as he saw that the Bio Hound disappeared with several heals. From there, Shin understood why a skill successor would get favorable treatment.

“I guess there is a big difference in power.”

“Hmm? Well obviously, those were the Arts, you know.”

Wilhelm responded while looking ahead.

“Iya, it’s just that it’s my first time seeing an Art upgraded.”

“…I’m kind of surprised at how little you understand.”

The two people didn’t stop moving while talking frivolously. While Wilhelm crushed the arm and leg of a Jack class Skull Face with Venom, Shin beat a humanoid monster, gray orc, with the back of the blade.

The gray orc had another name, Zombie Orc. Its appearance was exactly like an orc version of a zombie monster.

“Please comfort those who are wounded, 【Heal】!!”

Rashia’s healing was focused on the weakened monsters. The level difference was still huge, but the Heal, which became a skill, showed a far superior effect compared to the art version. The two undead were changed into grains of light without much effort.

It was Rashia herself, who was surprised the most at the rapid level up and skill effect.

“It seems like it will speed up a little with this.”

“However, to meet the requirements ― almost none of these creeps are higher than level 150. Even if it is daytime, I wonder if it is because we are outside of the sealed zone, how annoying.”

"…Wait a moment. What is this seal talk? I've never heard of this."

"Oioi, did you come without knowing about it? So that dangerous monsters don't go out from here, there is a monster protectant barrier set up inside the plains. For some reason, the higher level undead appear near the center. The guild is managing it strictly."

"I see, the effect of the seal is concentrated onto the strong monsters, and leaves the weak alone, huh?"

"The seal item seems to have a limitation too. It couldn't be used here, I guess."

Normally for a dungeon, the deeper the layer, the stronger the monsters are. Apparently on these plains, the depth of the layer seems to have been changed to the distance to the dungeon's center."

"What should I do to enter inside the seal?"

"An A rank or higher guild card from an adventurer shouldn't have any problem. Since it is managed by the guild."

"Then there is no problem. We will battle inside the seal tonight."

Shin said while watching Rashia eliminate a gray orc. The low-level monsters didn't approach much now, probably because her level rose. This meant they had to change the hunting ground. Though some of the monsters which attacked, such as the Jack class Skull Face, exceeded level 150 as expected, they were only a few in number including the 2 encounters, which they defeated just moments ago.

The number of the defeated could be counted with the fingers on both hands and were far from the target number. The 3 continued to battle for a while, and then decided to withdraw once Rashia's level rose above 80.

After returning to the base, they took a nap until the sun set. The surroundings were clear, but Shin and Wilhelm took turns standing watch for cautions sake. Whether Rashia was mentally tired or not, she fell asleep without taking much time.

Shin decided to do some skill investigation while he stood watch because he had some spare time. Since he had already been using the combat system skills since the first day he transported into this world, he used detection system skills this time. There was a limit to how many skills he could use simultaneously during the game, and he had to activate them one by one.

"This is…"

He unintentionally leaked out a voice.

When he attempted to use more skills than the limit number, no problem seemed to arise. In addition, skills that were not possible to use simultaneously before were now possible. For example, when 【Sign Perception】 and 【Search】 were used together. Moreover, each skill effect's advantage was put together, and the weak points almost vanished. The range of the effect was extended, and the distinction of individuals was possible at the same time.

"The effect from the skills combining was already exceptional. Are there any changes with the effects of the similar skills when used simultaneously?"

This one required more inspection…he made a mental note of it. There appeared to be only a pattern of more benefits for the moment, but he doubted whether it would go that conveniently well.

Besides, various thoughts filled his mind, like did it have any effect even with the automatic activation types? Was it restricted to manual activation types?

The time for standing watch passed in an instant while he was doing the inspections.

The sun set, and the time was 8:00 at night. Shin and Wilhelm judged that it was a suitable time, and advanced into the interior of the Wraith Plains with Rashia. Shin thought that it might take some time, but they were able to advance without much trouble since the haze that covered the plains in daytime was dispersed in the bright moonlight.

“What’s up with that haze? I certainly thought it would appear at night.”

“Well who knows, but from the story of my magician colleagues, the magic power in the dungeon has begun to leak out, though it is only a story.”

“Magic power?”

“They say that the dungeon itself is like an undead monster. Since the dungeon rose above the ground halfway, it receives damage when the sun shines upon it. I think that has affected the dungeon, which is filled with magic power, to overflow above ground.”

“Really? Certainly I understand that as a theory.”

It was a commonly known point that an undead was weak during the daytime. In fact, the undead emit a black aura when they are in the sun. It’s something like HP, which one could see. However, it was released into the air with time. Perhaps that was the real nature of the haze, a grand version of the aura that breaks out during the daytime.

“Hmm, I wonder if the lost magic power is being restored now?”

“I guess so. Well, that has nothing to do with us now.”

After Wilhelm said that, they returned to walking for a while. A transparent blue wall that was set up in front of them came into view. It appeared that they somehow had arrived at the seal location.

“Is this it?”

“Correct, this is the seal I talked about during the day. The blue wall is easy to understand since it is visualized, but it also covers the invisible, aerial part.”

“I see.”

Its height was only 4 mels at most, even if it was called a wall. Shin thought that there was a possibility that monsters could jump over, but it seemed that he was worried for nothing. Wilhelm looked back for an instant.

“Now then, is everyone ready?”

“Anytime.”

“I-I’m okay, too.”

“Kuu!”

Shin, Rashia and Yuzuha answer to Wilhelm's words. Wilhelm, who verified it, put his guild card on the wall, and an entrance of about 2 mels high and 1 mel wide appeared.

Wilhelm entered first as he had battle experience in the seal. Rashia and Yuzuha were next to enter, and Shin was last. It was to guarantee their safety, just in case a monster attacked from behind.

Inside the seal, it seemed no different from the outside.

However, the enhanced perception ability of Shin, by using the skills together, already picked up several hostile presences. Since he still had enough time before coming into contact with the enemies, he focused on obtaining detailed information on each individual.

—— 3 Rupt[3] Raptors from the front.

—— 2 Jump Kins from the left.

The appearance of the Rupt Raptor was a wyvern that had lost its wings. There were no hands, and it possessed a powerful leg with a strong kick. Moreover, there was the additional effect of paralysis on its claws. Its average level was around 170.

Seemingly, Jump Kin was a flying pumpkin. Wait, that isn't jumping, is it? Shin wanted to retort. Anyways the pumpkin was rotten. Expressions of emotion showed on the rotten pumpkin and it used fire magic skills when it was happy, and earth when it was sad. Its level was about 200 on average.

"They are coming, huh"

Wilhelm muttered while Shin analyzed the enemies. It seemed that the enemies had arrived at Wilhelm's perception range.

"Rupt Raptors from the front, Jump Kins from the left."

"You know?"

"Ah, Wilhelm, handle the Rupt Raptors. I will divert the Jump Kins."

"If you say so."

They nodded to each other and began to mobilize.

Protection of Rashia was left to Yuzuha, while Shin and Wilhelm rushed to their targets.

Shin came closer to the enemies with a speed different from before. He drew his katana and kicked the ground to jump toward the two Jump Kins.

The Jump Kins were floating 2, 3 mels above the ground.

"Sish!"

Two lines of sword sparks drew an arc in the sky, and the Jump Kin stopped their movements the following second. Shin landed before the sounds of 2 raw foods falling to the earth resounded in the quiet plains.

[3] Rupt from rupture

Thus, with the strike from the back side of the 『Red Chidori』, the 2 monsters suffered a double abnormality state of faint and paralysis. Shin took out a large wrapping cloth from the Item Box, and quickly wrapped the Jump Kin. He returned to Rashia for her to deal the finishing blow.

Then, about a dozen seconds later, Wilhelm also faced off against the Rupt Raptors.

With no hands, it could be said that it was, without a doubt, a bipedal type dinosaur. Its body was about 2 mels and was half rotted, similar to the Bio Hounds, although its speed and strength were not comparable. It was clumsy, but it became a troublesome monster when it cooperated.

"Fyun!"

Wilhelm exchanged attacks with the front Rupt Raptor, while the other two Rupt Raptors together leaped upon the trap he set and were knocked down by Venom. The body of the Rupt Raptors were brittle. Hence, when a bone was broken, a vivid sound of internal organs exploding could be heard.

While confirming with a glance that it didn't disappear from the damage he dealt, Wilhelm stood against the remaining Rupt Raptor. Whether or not it didn't have a choice to escape, the last remaining one stared at Wilhelm.

"Going easy on something is so damn bothersome."

Simultaneously with that phrase, the view of the Rupt Raptor turned black.

The Rupt Raptors had their heads caved in, with broken legs, and parts of their body had also collapsed while being tied by the rope. Wilhelm too, then returned to the place where Rashia was.

"Ii～ya～～～!!"

It goes without saying that a scream from Rashia was heard, from where the three people were gathered.

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While Shin's party worked hard hunting undead in the middle of the Wraith Plains, dozens of mels from there, the sound of battle resounded from several figures inside a forest.

"Surround it! Aim at its core!"

"Give the injured potions for recovery! Priests and Mages use the light system arts!!"

"Attract the Jack's attention! Don't let it cooperate with the Pawns!!"

While the group of knights in full body shining armor let out a loud voice, they slashed at the Skull Faces. Behind the guard knights who handled a shield, there were a group of people wearing robes and priest cloths while firing dazzling light balls at the Skull Faces.

The black aura around the Pawn class Skull Faces vanished the moment it touched the light and it turned into mere bones. However, no one loosened up their guard in this place. Because the most formidable enemy still remained.

"Guu, its attack is too heavy."

"Anyone who has strength left, go help! It won't be possible to suppress it if the number of people standing decreases any further!!"

“Damn, what the hell is that!?”

Voices of half desperation resounded through the forest. Though there were dozens of knights with extensive fighting ability and they were hand-picked from the alliance countries, they hadn’t dealt any damage that could be said to be a fatal blow.

“No matter how much of a Jack class it is, we are supposed to endure here, but…”

The complaint that leaked unintentionally was drowned out by the sound of sword and shield clashing.

Normally, the battle should have ended a long time ago, but the Jack class Skull Face held a strange white shield, that repelled the vigorous attacks from the knight group. Many of the knights were injured by the damage taken from the counterattacks.

The skilled knight who commanded the battle, Berg, was also unable to decide whether they should attack the Skull Face which made unexpected movements.

It had an abnormal upper limit of expert class, quick sword techniques, in addition, the shield almost nullified the light attribute magic and magic system arts that should have been the weak point of any undead monster. Although the Skull Face was surrounded, attacking it unskillfully caused injury and the risk of being impatient was getting bigger.

(With the way things are going, it will not move anywhere. If only that shield didn’t exist, at least something could be done somehow…)

Since the battle had started, Berg had contemplated it a countless number of times. The existence that made the Skull Face a formidable enemy. High defensive ability and magic resistance. When he thought about it, the Skull Face’s movement hadn’t become slower, so it seemed that the shield wasn’t that heavy. He couldn’t help but to click his tongue, as if it was using some kind of irregular weapon in this battle.

(However, that doesn’t mean that no damage was dealt to the enemy either.)

Berg and the rest of the knights had their pride and had gained experience through numerous battles, thus they had techniques. By using every effort they had, little by little, they managed to deal some damage somehow. While ascertaining comrade and enemy conditions, they would eventually reach the road to victory. However, following the situation, Berg was getting ready to call for a withdraw when a silver flash ran into the knights’ view.

As the flash ran straight toward the Skull Face without stopping for a moment, he quietly stood still next to it.

――――Time stopped.

The battlefield which should have been filled with clamor, regained its former silence in an instant.

The real nature of the flash was silver hair that shined when hit by light. Because the owner of the hair ran too fast, it was seen only as a flash to the eyes of the knights.

Though the knights were slow and full of openings, no one felt danger from it. It was because they knew that the person with silver hair had never failed to give a decisive blow once so far.

The silver hair seemed very graceful with brilliant silver and transparent blue eyes. The expression showed a faint smile that possessed both motherhood and a mystique kind of work of art, too.

Pointed ears were visible when her hair was blown to the side by the wind, showing that her race was either elf or otherwise high elf.

Her clothes resembled waitress clothes, but they were not necessarily similar. If a person with modern knowledge was nearby, they would have guessed it was close to the maid cloth type called Victorian Maid. The apron was big, and the hem of the skirt was long. That was the uniform that the employees of Tsuki no Hokora wore. Was it made to fit her body? Or because she had a good figure originally? The clothes boosted her breasts to the bulging point, it was obvious that the eyes of several of the knights were focused on them.

Her attire itself brought about a calming atmosphere. The person who held a dagger in one hand, who gathered all of the attention in the battlefield to herself, was the sole High Elf of Tsuki no Hokora. The acting manager, and who conveyed the skills from ancient times.

That person was, Schnee Raizar.

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“Wide Heal!”

The voice echoed throughout the quiet place.

At the same time, a strong, gentle light wrapped around the surrounding knights. It was the magic skill system 【Wide Heal】 released by Schnee. A wide area version of heal.

The knights, who were weakly sitting on the ground, recovered without a single wound when the light that wrapped their bodies disappeared.

While everyone raised their voices in admiration, Berg, the commander, promptly calmed himself down. He realized he was getting too careless, so he tried to re-focus his mind, and gave out instructions loudly.

As might be expected from a veteran, there were no useless instructions. The surrounding knights started to mobilize in a rush, and a different noise resounded throughout the forest from a little while ago.

“You have been a big help…we were thinking about stopping and withdrawing.”

Berg formally thanked Schnee who stood near him. His voice was still rattling.

“No, I was able to defeat it because of everyone’s assistance in fighting.”

The words of encouragement reached Berg’s ear. Berg thought that this feeling, that his mind was being cleansed just from hearing her voice, was not just his imagination.

“I am honored when you say so. But actually, it was thanks to Schnee-dono that the undead was defeated, please let me show Schnee-dono deference here.”

“If you say so…however, we cannot relax yet.”

Schnee replied with an awkward smile.

It was not a lie that they should be focused and remain on guard. It was the reality.

This incident began one month ago; it was at the time when an adventurer, who just had become a rank B, approached the Wraith Plains to test his strength. That adventurer was heading toward the Wraith Plains through the forest, and when he tried to enter the haze which showed the boundary line of the Wraith Plains, a Skull Face appeared and broke through the haze a few mels from where the adventurer was.

A monster from the Wraith Plains should not exist outside of it, and it was a situation that would overturn common sense.

Even though the adventurer was stunned from the impossible scene, he managed to break off from the fight. He left the place immediately when he understood the abnormality of the situation, and went to nearest town’s guild with all of his effort.

The guild that received the information quickly decided to dispatch an investigation team. From the investigation afterwards, the condition was unclear but although some monsters were much stronger than others, it was confirmed that monsters had come out from the haze and spilled into the forest.

The plains were vast, so it wasn’t understood when and where they left from; furthermore, it took several weeks until it was clearly confirmed that a monster had passed through the haze. It was unknown how many monsters reached the forest, and to make matters worse, because a control point was not set up, damage had already started to occur in the countries near the Wraith Plains.

It was the reason why the advanced level adventurers went all out when Shin went to the guild for the first time before.

Of course, the damaged countries wouldn't just sit and do nothing either. They set-up every possible type of security and also set up patrols to protect the people of their own country. The greatest problem was that the monsters breaking through the haze had abilities that far surpassed the commonly known monsters. In most cases, coming into contact with the enemy would result in either annihilation or retreating, even with enough battle capabilities from allies.

Kings from each country that were concerned about this, united under the name of an alliance for the first time, and put together the best knights from each troop to form a monster subjugation force, a plan to calm the situation. At the same time, a request to a certain person was issued.

The requested destination was 『General Store Tsuki no Hokora』.

And that certain person was the acting manager of Tsuki no Hokora, Schnee Raizar.

Though whether or not she would accept the request was a gamble, Schnee accepted the request purely to protect the people. Thus, she went quickly and participated in the monster subjugation force.

"I understand. Then, I will leave to Schnee-dono the monsters' weapons and raw materials as according to the contract."

"Yes, I will hold them for now."

She nodded at Berg's words, and Schnee stored the equipment from the Skull Face that was scattered in the surrounding area into the Item Box.

Since the subjugation force was a joint military unit of knights from two or more countries, the scramble for precious equipment and raw materials was considered. After the subjugation was completed, she was expected to distribute it equally except for a portion. Schnee, who had the highest battle capabilities, was also given the safekeeping role, with forestalling and anti-theft by usage of the Item Box.

While seeing Schnee put an item away, Berg thought, if there was no Schnee Raizar, the situation would have advanced towards the worst case scenario.

From the battle just now, he understood that there was an enemy that they could not beat, even with the top class ability of the knights from each country. Certainly, part of it was because of the poor cooperation since it was a joint military unit, but it didn't change the fact that the strength of the monster was abnormal.

The problem above all else was that there were monsters possessing extraordinary gear like the previous Skull Face. According to the information that had been collected up to now, it seemed that all of the Skull Faces held special gear, but it couldn't absolutely be confirmed.

From Berg's view, he prayed that these kinds of equipments would run out.

Up until now, Schnee had defeated a few of the monsters with special weapons, and the knights then took charge with just the numerical advantage. The arrangement was to contact Schnee immediately if there was an encounter with a weapon holder. The situation was somehow good enough this time. The monster that the knights had a hard time fighting with was instantly defeated by Schnee. And in addition to that, close range battle was assumed to be the weak point of elves.

"As expected of someone who stood side by side with a High Human before."

The continental conquerors, the High Humans, which once existed. The people in this world couldn't help but to have sense of respect towards those who fought with them. The achievement of those conquerors was carved into the memory of the people without fading, even now after a long time.

The reason why the knights fought bravely was also because there were strong feelings to compete with such an existence. No one wanted to show an unsightly appearance and misbehave themselves, as such, the monster subjugation went smoothly without any arguments as a result.

Several monsters that were in the reports were among the last Skull Faces that were defeated. They still needed to confirm whether or not any monsters had been passed over with the adventurer who had been dispatched by the guild after they had left. If there was nothing, the subjugation force would return. And a surveillance network would spread out under the cooperation of each country and guild.

"It would be good if there is nothing more, but…"

Berg talked to himself, suddenly remembering an unpleasant predicament from his long life full of experience. And then he saw the casual Schnee, who seemed to be reading a letter eagerly in the open space where the raw materials of the Skull Face were scattered.

"Schnee-dono? Did something happen?"

When Berg called out, Schnee put the letter away and turned around. During that period, Berg, by chance, saw 『Blue Moon』 written on there, but he didn't know what that was.

"No, its nothing. After this though, because I will continue searching for someone, we will mobilize separately. Please launch the magic item I gave you if you encounter a monster, since it is difficult to pinpoint the specific area."

"Roger that."

Schnee, after that short communication, quickly left the place.

While maintaining an unbelievable speed, even while wearing a long skirt, Schnee thought over the content written in the letter.

It was the information on the message card that was sent from Tiera, which had written that a certain person seemed to be heading to the Wraith Plains.

The name of the person was not so unusual. There were a lot of people with similar names if she thought about searching for them. However, the story was different when the person has 『Blue Moon』. There was only one such person as far as Schnee knew.

"Did you come back, and return it…"

While noticing that she herself was not calm, Schnee continued to run at full speed. Her destination was the Wraith Plains.

She was irritated because of the time taken up by the monster search. Even if it was not her main job, without skimping on it, it was the obligation of a person who had received the work, so she still went.

Her heart was getting more impatient.

She might finally meet the person whom she looked forward to the most.

That thought filled Schnee, who deeply yearned for it.

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The hunting party started in the center of Wraith Plains and lasted for several nights. Currently, Shin's party was still in the sealed area.

"Oi, Dammit, Shin! Pecker Hollow is coming!"

"It can't be helped, let's withdraw right away."

Shin and Wilhelm perceived the monster that was approaching and had Rashia and Yuzuha go outside the seal. If a person was separated by the seal barrier, it seemed that they couldn't be sensed by the monsters inside, even if they were very close. The Pecker Hollow appeared to lose interest in Shin and the others, and after loitering around for a while it left the place in no time.

The monster, Pecker Hollow, which approached was an undead monster at level 541. A large amount of corpses were joined together by a vengeful spirit to form a large monster. It had the upper body of a mantis, with folded forelimbs like sickles, and compound eyes. Also, though it had eyes that were compounded and the forelimbs were folded like sickles, it didn't have similar organs to a mere insect. A large amount of people's eyes were gathered within the compound eyes, and a person's bones were gathered together to become the form of the sickles. It had feet and hands sticking out everywhere from it's body, and somehow or another it gave off an abominable feeling. It was such an appearance that it caused almost all female players to approach neither the field nor the dungeon at all.

And most troublesome of all was its skill, 【Deadman's Howl】. Though this skill caused little damage, it also inflicted the disorders of: confusion, curse, and other abnormal states at the same time. Moreover, the minimum level of the abnormal states were Ⅴ, which could be said to be brutal. Anyways, it would not be so bad if it hit Shin or Wilhelm, but Rashia and Yuzuha might receive the maximum level of the abnormal states in one go.

As expected, they had to evacuate to the outside of the seal when the troublesome monster appeared, since it was too dangerous to attack it.

"Did it leave?"

Wilhelm asked.

"Just wait a little more for the time being. We will be in trouble if it comes back after hearing the sound of battle."

If the small fry's were included, the number of monsters that had already been defeated in battle was already more than 200 over the last several days. If Shin's count was not wrong, Rashia should be able to learn the long-cherished 【Purification】 after one more kill.

"Are Rashia and Yuzuha alright?"

"Yes, somehow I'm already becoming accustomed to it…"

"Kuu!"

While smiling wryly at the answer from Rashia, who was strangely looking far away, and at the energetic Yuzuha, Shin searched for a presence within the range of his perception. He was able to confirm one level 343 Jack class Skull Face, two level 158 Gray Orcs, one level 177 Gel Bison, and four level 249 Ein Jackals.

Gel Bison was a monster which had a slime-like, transparent gelatinous material that adhered to the skeletal remains of a bison. When a person approaches, the gel becomes like a whip and attacks. And then, it melts the prey while eating the opponent who was immobilized.

Ein Jackal was a monster that eats tainted meat. Because of that, it joined the undead group. It had the appearance of a purple jackal of about two mels. It was a low class monster, but had demon eyes that could paralyze its opponent. It was a difficult enemy for a beginner class player who was just getting into the game.

There was no problematic Pecker Hollow in the perception range anymore. Since time had passed after it moved outside the perception range, they assumed it was safe.

As for the distance for each monster, the nearest was the Skull Face and the other monsters were at the edge of the perception range.

“There is a Skull Face nearby, but it’s level is unusual.”

“What do you mean?”

“What’s the matter?”

Wilhelm and Rashia threw a question at Shin’s remark.

“The level is 343. Did I tell you the story about that Skull Face that had a King class level? I think this monster might be similar to that.”

“Though the place here is slightly irregular, the story of a monster like that leaving from here has not been heard. However, for the past month, something strange has been happening in the kingdom.”

“…That reminds me, Ragnal-san said that events where strong undead monsters attacked the village in Beirun occurred frequently.”

Rashia, who heard about the level of the Skull Face, took out the information from the corner of her memory. Beirun was a country that was located on the other side of the Wraith Plains and the Bayreuth kingdom.

“Strong undead, huh? It seems to be related after all. And who is Ragnal-san?”

“It is the master in the bar that I brought you to. You met him once.”

“Ah! It’s that person, huh?”

He recalled the silent man from Wilhelm’s words. That time, Wilhelm certainly said he was an adventurer friend.

“Well for now, leave the story for another time. What would you do? I would feel bad leaving it alone.”

Shin said and looked at Wilhelm.

“What kind of power did it have?”

“In my personal opinion, its ability was corresponding to its level. It is necessary to be cautious, as that Skull Face had unimaginable movements. The fellow I fought before had some tricky moves.”

“We only need to beat it, huh? It shouldn’t be necessary to make Rashia cross a one-way bridge.”

“That’s a good point.”

“No, I will go too!!”

Wilhelm proposed to Shin that the two of them would knock the abnormal enemy down. But as her level raised, Rashia became confident and was filled with eagerness.

“What to do? I don’t have any problem particularly. I think Rashia will be safe as long as she carries the item I gave her.”

The two people looked at each other spontaneously.

“Indeed. Oi Rashia, do you really want to do it?”

“Of course, I can’t return home with my head held high if you protected me the whole time!!”

Was it the result of the battles over the past few days? Rashia wasn’t shaken to see a monster over level 200, let alone a zombie, as she yelled with a high-spirited voice now. Actually, even though the Skull Face outside the seal was a low level monster, it was still a level 80+, and she was able to fight it without feeling daunted now. This was the fruit of the Spartan training by Shin and Wilhelm. It was probably too much for a girl of pubescence, but unfortunately they didn’t really care about that.

“Then, let’s do it!”

“Oi, don’t get in the way as much this time.”

“I won’t.”

Shin and Wilhelm were concerned about Rashia while facing the Skull Face. Though Rashia was slower due to the speed difference, she entrusted Yuzuha and the 2 people to go ahead because she only had to deal the finishing blow.

This time the Skull Face didn’t have any strange equipment. However, the posture with the sword and shield was similar to the unique Skull Face monster that Shin had fought before.

“This fellow might be similar to the one I fought before? It’s posture is quite similar.”

“It’s doesn’t matter if it’s the same. Oraa!!”

Wilhelm, who had a long reach, began his preemptive attack.

The single blow, which was aimed at the Skull Face’s core, was caught by the round shield on its left hand. The shield produced sparks as it was being drilled into. Though 『Venom』 cut into into the round shield, the arm that held the shield had already shaken the hit off, and the trajectory of 『Venom』 veered off.

Then the Skull Face promptly unleashed a single blow with its sword. Together with the sound of cutting air, the sword was swung downward. Wilhelm quickly pulled 『Venom』 back and received it. Sparks scattered from the clash.

The sound of metal interlocking sent echoes into the night around the plains. The single blow was not only packed with power but also added weight to it, causing Wilhelm to stick to the ground.

Shin, who had waited behind Wilhelm, sensed that the Skull Face tried to knock Wilhelm down using the shield arm, so right away he slashed at the Skull Face while jumping from the back to the front of the shield.

However the shield on its left arm split into two at the same time as a “Kin” sound was heard. If its reaction had been any slower after the flash, its left foot would have been cut in an instant. It was able to minimize the damage dealt at the expense of one arm, which was usually unthinkable for a normal Skull Face.

“I see, this bone bastard really is able to move surprisingly different from the usual ones, isn’t it?”

Wilhelm, who witnessed its movement, sneered while baring his fanged teeth.

In the case of the Skull Face, if the core remained, even with an arm missing, it was not a problem for Rashia to deliver the final blow. Therefore, like any other difficult to kill monster, going easy was unnecessary.

Facing the Skull Face’s capability, Wilhelm’s fighting spirit was ignited.

“Are you forgetting our objective?”

“I know. I just want to enjoy myself a little.”

“I think that’s all right, but it would be bad if you force it.”

“I’m not worried about that. This fellow still resembles a practice board to me.”

Wilhelm prepared 『Venom』 while laughing wildly again.

He lowered his center of gravity. The spearhead was slightly pulled back, and 『Venom』 was slanted diagonally upward.

His right hand held the handle, while his left hand was stretched out. His appearance right now was just like a bow about to be shot. As it matched the rising of Wilhelm’s fighting spirit, the feeling of hearing the sound of a bow being drawn to its limit was heard.

Whether the Skull Face noticed Wilhelm’s presence or not, the Skull Face took its stance again. It pulled its right leg slightly behind it and the right hand holding the sword was raised almost level to its head. The sword tip was pointed straight at the sky, and an aura that slowly swayed gathered onto the Skull Face’s body.

In front of the knight-like posture, Wilhelm raised his fighting spirit even higher.

As if the atmosphere froze, not even one of them moved. And, it was similar to the silence between the cocking and firing of a gun.

“Will!!”

“Uh!!”

The shout from Rashia shattered the frozen atmosphere.

Two shadows ran, triggered by it.

The single blow of decapitation released by the Skull Face was intercepted, and red sparks brightened the darkness. Their weapons crossed in an instant.

In the next moment, the Skull Face dropped to the ground left with only a head and body intact, with Wilhelm standing still and 『Venom』 thrusted out.

The Skull Face had what people called; a near death experience. Its arms and legs vanished and numerous crack appeared on the surface of its core, all from the aftermath of a single blow from 『Venom』. It was on the verge crumbling.

“Rashia, don’t just stand there. Quickly, end that creep.”

“I almost didn’t get a turn. What was all of my determination from earlier for?!”

Rashia was angry at the result of her being left out, because her resolve in risking her life was wasted.

“There was no other way. There was no room for you to step in.”

“Urgh, God, is this a trial?…”

Though Rashia was in a bad mood, she didn’t forget to heal the core. The aura that covered the core disappeared when it received the light of healing from Rashia, and the Skull Face completely vanished.

At the same time, a golden light enveloped Rashia’s body.

“W-What is this?”

“Rashia!?”

Rashia was confused by the sudden event. Wilhelm, who was also surprised, couldn’t move carelessly without knowing what had happened.

“No need to worry!! This effect happens when the requirement has been met and a new skill is learned!!”

Shin raised his voice to calm the two confused people down. Apparently, Shin’s calculation was not wrong, and the 200th body was the Skull Face just now.

The light effect faded away as soon as Shin raised his voice. Rashia’s gaze wandered through the space as if she became engrossed in something.

“Oi, Rashia! Are you alright?”

“Fue? Ah, yes. I’m alright.”

Wilhelm called out to her while tapping her shoulder, and she replied with a somewhat lifeless voice.

“With you staring into space like you are dazed, are you really alright?”

“I’m alright, okay. It was because the way to use the skill suddenly flowed into my head.”

“Was there any difference from the time you used the secret book?”

“Um, yes there was. The secret book somehow had a more gentle feeling to it, while this time, it was more of an abrupt feeling. But maybe that explanation is poor and difficult to understand.”

It seemed to feel differently when compared to the secret book.

For some reason, there seemed to be various effects that occurred when a person learned a skill. Because the person in question wasn’t harmed, he didn’t have to worry, but Shin just didn’t understand that feeling properly. In the first place, the experience of information flowing directly into the brain was impossible.

“Well, first of all, because you successfully acquired 【Purification】. Congratulations.”

“Indeed, you did well.”

“Kuu!”

Shin, Wilhelm and Yuzuha each gave her their blessing.

“Thank you very much. I can take care of the orphanage with this, too.”

With the acquisition of 【Purification】, the orphanage would not have to worry about the inheritance problem anymore. It was Rashia’s real feelings as she thanked them with tears in the corner of her eyes.

“Now then, let’s go to base, get some sleep, and quickly return to the Bayreuth kingdom in the morning.”

“That’s right. There is no reason to stay here any longer.”

“Yes, let’s go then.”

With each of them smiling, they went outside the seal. There were no signs of enemies around the three people and one animal.

The request ended with this. They only had to return to the kingdom now. All of the members who were there thought so.

Until that happened.

◆◆◆◆

It happened out of the blue.

Right then, in the Wraith Plains, the insects and wild animals in the night strangely went silent. Therefore, Shin noticed immediately. Yuzuha, who was on top of Shin’s head, also perceived the unusual event with its superior hearing, which was the characteristic of animals, as its ears stood up.

“Hmm? What is that sound?”

“Kuu?”

It was a sound like the wind blowing through the grass. Shin wouldn’t mind if it was only the sound of the surrounding grass rubbing against each other.

But he couldn’t help but worry if the sound was also happening at the same time as a strange noise was heard, like that of a creature being crushed.

Shin and Yuzuha came to a halt and looked back, and so they saw the grotesque scene.

“What…is that?”

“Kuu…”

“Hmm? What happened to you…guys.”

Wilhelm noticed Shin’s movements and turned around, he too was speechless as he saw the same thing.

The place where the Skull Face was just defeated before, there was now a black orb just floating there, one that did not exist until just now. It was now in the process of swallowing the Pecker Hollow. When he looked at the map screen, a huge red marker, which wasn't there before, was now at the edge of the view. White and blue markers were displayed which indicated Shin and the others.

The Pecker Hollow was rapidly being sucked into the black orb, which was about 30 cemels wide. The volume obviously didn't match. A crunching, cracking sound was being made, because the Pecker Hollows body was being compressed.

The Pecker Hollow, which was the prey, didn't even raise a death cry or show any other kind of resistance. All of the faces that appeared on its body seemed to be smiling. It appeared to be pleased with being completely absorbed.

"What the hell!? What the heck is that thing!?"

"Ugh, it is disgusting…"

Rashia covered her mouth from the spectacle of a person's face being crushed slowly, and crouched down. Wilhelm rushed to Rashia, and Shin stood between them and the black orb.

It didn't take much more time and the Pecker Hollow was completely sucked into the orb. Simultaneously, a big tremor suddenly occurred and the ground quivered.

"Uoo!?"

"Kya!"

"Kuuu!?"

In the spur of the moment, they somehow managed to keep their balance and avoided falling. When they looked around to see what had happened, they saw a purple light blowing toward the sky from everywhere in the Wraith Plains.

From the place where the Skull Face had fallen, a sparkly light was rising to the sky.

"Beautiful…"

Rashia muttered. This sudden occurrence was indeed really wondrous and beautiful.

If only there was no mysterious black orb in front, Shin would have enjoyed it, too. However, this was not the time to enjoy the scene.

He slightly expanded his map view. He noticed that the red markers, that had progressed to the edge of the view, had disappeared from the map.

"This is…"

His turned his attention away from the map and stared in the direction of the red markers where the monsters were, using the skill 【Long Sight】, while staying cautious of the orb. Then, he saw that the Gel Bison and Ein Jackal were emitting a sudden purple light from throughout their bodies. That glittery and shining light resembled the effect that happened when an undead monster was killed during the time in the game.

The monster, which was emitting light from its body, gradually lost it outline, and a short time later it would vanish like it was dissolved into the air.

And that, the light, which painted an arc in the atmosphere, was absorbed by the black orb.

Shin and Wilhelm who saw the scene moved to protect Rashia. While wary of their surroundings, they looked at the orb in front of them.

“Shit, its sucking the demon essence in!”

“Demon essence?”

“Ah! That light, the demon’s essence, is what moves the undead. Because it’s disappeared, it becomes impossible to maintain the body.”

“I see.”

After a while, all of the demon essence that existed in the atmosphere was absorbed into the orb. Then the sphere whirled up into the sky, and stopped at a height about 10 mels from the ground. At the same time, a dark aura spread around the orb. It gradually took shape, and bones like a Skull Face were formed. In addition, it expanded to several times the size of a regular Skull Face. It was covered with jet black armor, and the aura filled in between the bones and the armor. It only took 10 seconds.

A Skull Face more than 10 mels in height appeared before Shin and his party.

If it didn’t have a skeleton head attached, it would remind them of a valor knight. It was unimaginable that the ornament on the armor was made from the aura.

But from the body, there was a sinister aura rising up. It was the definite evidence that it was an undead.

And, its burning look in front of Shin and the party caused their bodies to freeze from tension.

――――『Lord Skull Face Lv. 804』

When Shin activated 【Analyze • X】, it displayed to him its name and its level.”

The levels numerical value was considered a high ranking enemy, even in THE NEW GATE.

“Level 804. Is it this dungeon’s boss?”

Shin was calmly asking himself this but Wilhelm intensely responded.

“Oi, the level you said just now, was that true?”

“Yes, no doubt about it.”

“That…it is at a level that could destroy a country!?”

“Kururuuu!!”

Yuzuha openly raised a roar to try to intimidate it, but Wilhelm and Rashia couldn’t hide their shaking from the impossible numerical value. Except those monsters that stayed in the Sacred Place, since the Dusk of the Majesty, the monster with highest confirmed level didn’t even reach level 600. Moreover, even that monster destroyed several countries at that time.

“B-But there is the seal and it is not possible to get out, right?”

“I wonder.”

When Shin replied to the anxious voice of Rashia, the Lord finally moved.

Its arm of several mels length bent and it clenched its fist. And then, while slightly bending its knee, it drew its fist toward the sky in an uppercut like form.

A dry sound, “gashari”, was made at the same time its arm finished expanding. The invisible barrier that was thought to be covering the sky made a breaking sound and scattered like the demon essence from before, as witnessed by Shin and his party.

“Damn, the seal is finished.”

“Ah! Perhaps it was shattered by a single blow just now.”

“O-Oh no…”

The seal that was supposed to keep high-level monsters inside was disappointedly broken too easily, Rashia probably lost her strength as she fell backwards onto her buttocks.

The eyes of the Lord which had been sucking the demon essence captured the sight of Shin and the others.

“Hii!!”

“Kuu…”

“Oi, it looked over here…”

Wilhelm swallowed his saliva down.

“Indeed.”

There were no eyeballs, but Shin and the others were certain that they were being looked at. Rashia turned pale and trembled at the pressure.

Wilhelm held Rashia who was at a loss, and got ready to escape.

“GuuuuUUUUUU――――――――GaaaAAAAAAAA!!!!!!!!”

The Lord let out a warcry as if it would not let any of them go. Shin put himself on guard as he felt the physical weight from the volume of the voice, while Yuzuha shrank its body, Wilhelm was forced to his knees, and Rashia covered her ears while crouching down.

“That roar, damn, it won’t let us get away huh?”

“No, it’s different. Look at the surroundings!”

Almost at the same time Shin raised his voice, white bones thrusted out, one after another, from the ground.

Obviously it was the arm of a humanoid monster. When the ground was gripped firmly, it dragged out its main body from the ground.

A skeleton that was wrapped in a rustic armor came out. Needless to say, it was a Skull Face. They ranged from the Jack, Queen, and to the King class. One by one they emerged from the ground until it became a huge uproar. Additionally, each of the individual monsters was two times larger than normal, as the King class was close to 8 mels tall. The number of Skull Faces filling up the plains had already almost reached that of an army.

The aura that was given off by each individual combined, and the entire plains was dyed black.

The emergence of the Skull Faces was happening all over the plains, the surrounding area around Shin and his party was already overflowing with Skull Faces.

“Will!! What to do, Will!!”

“Calm down! Don’t panic about what we have to do! Oi Shin, let’s break through to escape right away!”

“No, I will stay.”

“Ah? What are you saying, you bastard. Do you want to die!?”

Wilhelm, who was irritated at Shin’s awfully calm speech, tried to grab Shin’s shoulder. Though he put power in it, to make him turn around, Shin didn’t move an inch as if Wilhelm was grabbing a gigantic mass of rock.

Shin, then turned around slowly, while calmly releasing the 【Limit】.

“Uo!?”

“Kyaa!”

Wilhelm and Rashia opened their eyes wide at the torrent of power that was given off by Shin.

“I cannot leave this fellow alone. I will open a path so that Wilhelm and Rashia can go ahead toward the kingdom before me.”

“This power…what the hell are you?”

“There is no time to talk about it now. In addition, I have some personal business with this fellow. I don’t want you guys to be dragged into this because that would be bad, so please just get away as far as you can.”

Shin said that while accumulating magic power in both hands. Wilhelm was not able to argue against the overwhelming density.

“Dammit, it can’t be helped then. I will take Rashia and that fox with me. Do I need to collect the item at the base?”

“If it’s possible then that would be nice, but I’m not bothered if it’s lost.”

“Then let’s start quickly. I will properly hear the circumstances when you come back!”

“Ah, I understand. Because I will put a body strengthening buff on you, your speed will be faster than usual. Don’t fall down, okay?”

“Hah! Who the hell do you think you are talking to!! Hey, this fox, it doesn’t want to be separated from you.”

When Wilhelm pulled Yuzuha, Shin’s face was also pulled.

“Adadadada! Hey Yuzuha! Don’t cling there.”

“Kuu!! Kuu~!!”

Yuzuha, who disliked it, barked. It desperately clung, as if to say it didn’t want to leave Shin.

“Oi, what are you gonna do?”

“Yuzuha…”

By telepathy, Yuzuha’s strong feeling of not wanting to leave him was transmitted to Shin.

“…Sigh, I guess I don’t have any choice. Do you really never want to be separated?”

“Kuu!!”

Yuzuha, on top of Shin’s head, barked again. It was full of motivation.

“Have you settled your discussion? Then let’s be quick.”

“Ah sorry for the wait! Then let’s do this!!”

The body strengthening buff was put on Wilhelm, and while facing toward the direction of the base, Shin released a skill.

It was the lightning system magic skill, 【Lightning Bunker】.

2 parallel lines of very thick lightning bolts, with several mels diameter, were released towards the group of Skull Faces, and they instantly changed into charcoal. The lightning attack made a path through the encirclement of Skull Faces, while Shin maintained the skill.

“Go!!”

Wilhelm kicked the ground at the signal from Shin’s voice. With his leg strength raised by Shin’s buff, he ran through the breakthrough with enough force to leave an afterimage.

“Kyaaaa!!!――――――――――…”

Rashia screamed at the excessive speed, but it was immediately inaudible. Since the edge of the seal was close by, with Wilhelm’s speed, it probably wouldn’t take much time to get outside of the encirclement of the Skull Faces army. Though swords and spears were thrown from the separate Skull Faces outside of the lightning attack, it was repelled by 『Venom』 while their speed was maintained.

“Is he gone?”

“Kuu.”

He confirmed that the figures of the two people had disappeared and cancelled the 【Lightning Bunker】. He had killed dozens of Skull Faces, but a large amount of Skull Faces closed up the holes as soon as he cancelled the skill.

The opponents were the subordinates of the Lord Skull Face; Jack class, Queen class, and King class.

The glaring Lord didn’t pay any attention to Rashia and Wilhelm at all, it was focused on Shin the whole time.

There was no monster called Lord Skull Face according to Shin’s knowledge. There were no monsters that exceeded level 800 that Shin didn’t know of, in other words, it was a totally new monster. It was not an enemy that he could judge just from its level.

However, anything like an unknown enemy could become the key for Shin to return to his original world, so there was a possibility that some new information or something could be obtained. Since those possibilities existed, Shin didn't have the option to run away.

"Now then, should we go this way?"

"Kuu一!!"

Shin prepared his katana, and while feeling that Yuzuha's voice was reliable, he began to run toward the large army of Skull Face.

If one could say it with one word, it would be, "slaughter".

Bones shattering, swords breaking, and armors that became lumps of mere iron fell to the ground.

Several deep cracks and gouges scarred the ground, which were unimaginable, since he caused them without using magic.

It was all due to Shin swinging his katana.

"Woosh!"

He kept swinging his katana without using any skills. He cut the cores right in half, those of more than 10 Skull Faces just like that, and they became demon essences as they disappeared.

In addition, he also crushed the swords and armors.

Whenever the katana drew an arc in the plains, where the moonlight shined, the Skull Faces were knocked down, like a sand castle crumbling.

If it were normal adventurers, to defeat a King class, they must be prepared for dozens of sacrifices. But now, it was just a wooden figure in this place.

Like casually cutting down the grass that grows too much, the Skull Faces were definitely being killed.

"Kuoooooo!!"

Not only was Shin attacking, Yuzuha, who took a position on top of Shin's head, was also breathing out pale flames from its mouth and burning the enemy to ash.

It was a skill exclusive to monsters, 【Fox Fire】. It was a red flame, but an Element Tail originally spit out blue flames. Though it seemed difficult for the present Yuzuha, a diverse attack could be drawn out from the tails in the case of the adults with the original appearance of level 1000. As for the Element Tail, each one of their tails takes charge of either fire, water, earth, wind, lightning, light, or dark magic skills, as well as physical attacks, and magic system skills. It was like fighting multiple enemies from the opponent's point of view.

The only tail that Yuzuha seemed to be able to control was the magic system skill, which strengthened the 【Fox Fire】. Because it was not a skill that a player could use, it was simply based on the image that Yuzuha imagined.

"Man, there are too many enemies."

"Kuu."

Even though Shin and Yuzuha had already defeated more than 100 Skull Faces, they had hardly moved from their original spot. There were too many monsters. Moreover, even though each of them was bigger than usual, the gap from the defeated was quickly filled.

It felt like an eternity as he was doing the same thing again and again, like digging sand from the bottom of an hourglass and putting it back on top.

Apparently the Lord Skull Face, the boss, after making a massive amount of Skull Faces appear, withdrew to the center of the Wraith Plains. The plains were dozens of kemels from one end to another. Shin was at the edge of the plains, so no appearance of the Lord came into his range of view.

Having withdrawn to lure in the exhausted Shin, it might have started to prepare something.

Shin thought about how to make the enemy come out, while flourishing his katana and Yuzuha spat out flames. In the plains, which were dyed in black aura, only the circumference around Shin was cut out, like exposed skin.

“We shouldn’t overdo it too much?”

“Kuu!”

It looked like one person and one animal were going to be swallowed by the black muddy stream, if seen from the edge. But they talked in a carefree voice, which was inconceivable in this situation.

While chatting, Shin used a slashing attack to hit the Skull Faces, and the black muddy stream was pushed back on the contrary.

No enemy could break through the barrier-like, slashing attack in this place. Just like the Skull Face who fought with Wilhelm before, most of the Skull Faces were expert classes in footwork and sword techniques, but it could only gain them a little time. Rather, it was pathetic that they were no match for Shin.

“It’s no good, huh? The places where the enemies emerge from is too vast.”

Shin used the detection system skills together to scan the surrounding information. Thanks to his flashy actions, a lot of Skull Faces in the plains were gathered around Shin. But Shin perceived that there were some individuals leaving the plains; ignoring the battle.

And apparently there was a big reaction, so presumably there was a King class among them too.

“I’m gonna kick it up a notch. Hold on tight!”

“Kuu!!”

The powerful 『Red Chidori』 was swung around, and the surrounding Skull Faces disappeared.

While holding the 『Red Chidori』 in his left hand, he extended his arm behind him and made a throwing posture. The lighting that had run through 『Red Chidori』’s blade previously couldn’t be compared to the present. The katana blade, that was clad in red lightning, was completely luminescent in and of itself, and brightened the surroundings as if it emitted light. The sound of metal creaking could be heard; it was the shriek of the katana’s blade due to an excessive amount of magic power being poured into it. With his improved stats, it was impossible for the Legend grade weapon to endure Shin’s magic power.

Maybe sensing high density magic power mixing with the light, the Skull Faces hesitated to approach.

And, that hesitation gave Shin enough room to make his preparation.

Katana technique lightning combined skill, 【Hien Raikiri】[4].

It was a mixture of martial arts skill and magic skill. Then, the combo was put together into a single blow released by Shin.

The 『Red Chidori』 was thrown with strength that could be called inhuman, while also spreading out a shock wave. There was no kind of resistance in ripping apart the Skull Faces crowded together.

The red lighting immediately spread out in all directions from the katana's blade, moving toward the Skull Faces that became ashes one after another. The appearance was totally like a Hydra. A lightning-like red Hydra was trampling down the black wave with ultra high speed. It felt like the Skull Faces were voluntarily sacrificing themselves to the jaws of the lightning.

After the 『Red Chidori』 flew, a road with a width of about 10 mels was formed, and the ground was cut into from the shock wave and lightning.

Shin immediately ran on that road.

He aimed toward the center of the plains. To the Lord Skull Face.

If he defeated it or destroyed the dungeon core, Shin expected that this turmoil would be settled.

(If Schnee was here, I could have done something different.)

He thought so momentarily, but there was no point in asking for too much. He changed his mindset into that only he could do it now.

He took out a new weapon, and unsheathed it from its scabbard, while speeding up.

It was a 《Mythology》 grade, extra long katana, named 『Hamon Hirumaki』.

It was Japan's number one long katana. Its full length surpassed 3 mels, if the hilt was included, and the katana's blade reflected the moonlight in the darkness. Though it's a little different from the actual name, depending on the person, they would be reminded of 『Nenekirimaru』[5] when they heard the name.

『Hamon Hirumaki』 has a high anti-undead ability as was expected from that anecdote. It had an attack that boasted a ranged attack which was not inferior to a spear due to it having a very long blade.

"Fhew!!"

It was a simple cut, the same as the katana from before. But the Skull Faces that vanished appeared to be no match from a while ago.

The 『Hamon Hirumaki』 was originally a weapon that needed 800 STR or more for it to be swung properly, and it possessed a cutting ability that could cleave a low-level dragon's head off only with its own weight. If it was swung by a physical strength that surpassed the max stats by a player like Shin, the power was immeasurable.

The blade cut the air, and even the shock wave was impacted into the surrounding objects, splintering them altogether. The Skull Faces had no chance against it. The magnitude of power was different from the start. It was already a disaster for the Skull Faces. Large scale storms, earthquakes, floods and so on; the overwhelming destruction that one could not go against.

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[4] Flying Swallow Lightning Cutter
[5] Nenekirimaru is an exorcism blade which only harms yokai.

The present Shin was exactly like that.

He charged through the gauged-out ground at a speed faster than the slow progress from the situation before.

Though the Skull Faces filled the gap made by 『Hamon Hirumaki』, this time he didn't get stranded or stuck.

"Be gone!!"

Then Shin invoked a magic skill.

Wind system magic skill, 【Air Barret】.

It was a skill that made about a 30 ~ 40 cemels mass of wind that was launched in any direction, it had enough power that it could shoot down small flight monsters. However, Shin was not satisfied with only that much power. All of the wind mass that was fired randomly all around exceeded 2 mels, that power could easily blow away the Skull Faces that wore light armor. The Skull Faces flew into the sky like bowling pins, and there was no dignity as a monster of fear remaining anymore.

As he headed toward the center of the plains, the number of Skull Faces that faced Shin multiplied. The majority of the map displayed in Shin's view was red, and it was impossible to count the number of enemies.

While the white marker, which indicated himself, broke-through the red dyed tainted map on the edge of the view, Shin rushed forward.

The orb that had absorbed the Pecker Hollow appeared in his mind. Since then, the Skull Faces that emerged were certainly strong. But the abilities to strengthen its subordinates and respawn them was not unusual to some degree for a boss monster. Judging from the standards of this world, it would be extremely brutal, but Shin had experienced a larger scale if put on a scale. For this reason, while Shin swung his long katana, he wondered whether he could defeat the enemy as smoothly as that.

(There is no disadvantage in being cautious.)

He reserved his energy while he annihilated the enemies. It was possible since his stats were raised from the game era. Shin was surely powerful. But sometimes quantity exceeded quality. Regardless of how many of his stats were maxed, Shin was not invincible, nor immortal either. He could do nothing but die if killed.

"――――――――――――――――――――!!!!!!"

A roar resounded throughout the plains. With a high frequency like-signal, a large amount of hands started coming out of the ground.

The origin of the roar was the Lord Skull Face. Due to that roar, no matter how much he reduced the number of Skull Faces by, it didn't matter. Whenever it made a sound, new Skull Faces emerged from the ground.

"Again?"

He muttered while feeling that the source of the roar was nearby. He had the urge to use a wide area annihilation magic skill to blow off the excessive number that sprang out, but he endured it because he couldn't use it carelessly.

In this world, range and power were not the same as in the game. Even with the basic magic skill that Shin learned, especially with his stats, its power might be in an intermediate class or higher if he lost control. What scale could it become if he used the wide area magic at the highest class? It was unimaginable. A forest might vanish by mistake, so it was not a laughing matter.

The ability that rose remarkably at this moment, was restrained and became a burden while Shin fought.

(If it was only me here, I might do that.)

While seeing green markers displayed on the map, Shin invoked a magic skill.

Flame system magic skill, 【Ember Flame】.

By the way, the green marker expressed a neutral player or NPC who was neither friend nor enemy. In other words, it showed that this place had someone other than Shin.

Countless fireballs appeared high in the sky above Shin, they rained down over the Skull Faces that surrounded Shin and the green markers. The fireballs generated intense heat the moment they touched an object without exploding and would disappear. The Skull Faces that received a direct hit from the fireballs looked like bee nests and vanished.

Because it didn't spread flames, there were little flying sparks near the surroundings. And he didn't need to put up with any clouds of dust due to the explosions. Thus, he didn't relax on the aiming even if there was a considerable distance.

Though Shin didn't know it, it was the adventurers who had been dispatched to observe the Wraith Plains, the knights squadron. They accidentally encountered the Skull Faces which had left the plains, and it became a state of war.

"That's bad."

The Skull Faces' bigger physiques that Shin was fighting in his surrounding area interfered with his field of vision, so he couldn't see well, but they seemed to be receiving Shin's protection and were fighting well when he saw the movements of the marker. The level of the Skull Faces crowding around the green markers were about 300; fortunately it were the weak classes of Skull Faces that had been strengthened. However, there were Skull Faces exceeding level 500 that were approaching from the rear.

No matter how much he supported them with a magic skill, the distance was too far and there was a limit. Shin had learned to use combinations of skills, so he was able to sense it because the perception range had been expanded. He might be able to go if he could fly, but a skill that enabled flight was nonexistent in THE NEW GATE, so it was not possible to 'fly' even if it was possible to 'jump' using a skill.

"Why are they approaching in this direction? Did they not hear the roar?"

While clad in the storm of his blade as usual, he changed his course toward the green marker. He didn't know who they were, but he couldn't abandon them.

"Kuu?"

"Do you want to help?" As if Yuzuha asked, and answered "They will die before you arrive", as he defeated the nearby enemies with a magic skill. Though the red marker indicated that the Skull Faces disappeared, multiple individuals of the red appeared immediately from the ground.

"Tsk, there is not enough time!!"

He collected magic power in his hands in order to save those who were surrounded.

The moment Shin was about to release his magic skill, a blue lightning bolt exploded ahead of Shin's point of view.

It was the same lightning system magic skill that he used when Shin let Wilhelm and Rashia escape, 【Lightning Bunker】.

The lightning passed near the green markers at point-blank range, and defeated the nearby Skull Faces. Not one wound was inflicted on the adventurers, while all the surrounding enemies were destroyed.

Shin felt relief for that situation for a short time, but he was momentarily unable to take his eyes off of it, due to the color of the marker and the name displayed.

The color of the marker was blue. The color that indicated a friend.

The displayed name was 【Schnee Raizar】.

◆◆◆◆

The blue marker, that showed Schnee, approached the green markers. It was likely that they were told to leave, as the green markers left the plains immediately. And then, the blue marker instantly changed direction towards Shin. It pushed forward in a straight line.

Though she was slower than Shin, almost all of the Skull Faces that bumped into her were instantly killed.

Silently killing and cutting the approaching Skull Faces, Shin also went toward Schnee. However, his steps were heavy. There was a hint that she remembered him in the letter from Tiera, but he didn't know what to say when they met again.

Schnee, in the game era, didn't converse more than what she was programmed to. As a support character, although he had raised her charm setting to the max, he had no idea if that had affected her personality.

If he thought about it, the store had been left neglected. As it was, there hadn't even been any news from him for 500 years. What did she think of Shin? It was impossible to guess. Instead, it would not be strange if she was angry and hated him.

But without thinking about it too much, Schnee arrived at Shin's position.

――――While a black skeleton squirmed, the two people had their reunion.

Whether it sensed something or not, the Skull Faces' movements stopped.

Even if it tried to move right away, it couldn't move forward; as if it was blocked by a totally invisible wall. Though Shin, while perplexed, also noticed the surroundings, he was hit lightly by paws on his forehead as some kind of interaction. Judging from the thoughts that flowed to him, Yuzuha seemed to have erected a barrier somehow. It didn't seem like it would be able to hold for a long time, but it was not the situation for a lengthy reunion, so it was not a problem.

When he conveyed "Sorry", the feeling of the thought "It's all right" was returned. The fox could indeed read the atmosphere.

That exchange of thoughts was finished in an instant, and Shin changed his attention to Schnee again.

While her silver hair swayed from the wind, Schnee stared right at Shin.

Seeing that, Shin thought, 'She hasn't changed at all' which was indeed an ordinary impression. The silver, shining hair, the transparent blue eyes, and even the clothes she wore; not one thing had changed from the last time they parted.

"…Have you been well?"

Though he thought he should say something else, only those words came out from his mouth.

Those were foolish words, he thought to himself. If the game had been over though, he wouldn't have met her again, an NPC. So he had been curious.

In a sense, she was the longest-lasting friend he had in the game, and the one he held the most affection for. She was totally similar to a player even if he only saw her because of the VR(Virtual Reality). Therefore, in the VR-world, where the SF(Science Fiction) was excellent, the AI could be equipped with a conversation function…and so on, he thought.

"……"

Schnee didn't answer.

Her eyes became watery, and her lips pressed together tightly, as if to suppress something. Seeing the figure which was desperately enduring tears, Shin panicked.

"Schnee…tsu!?"

The moment he called out her name, the flash of silver flickered.

He was embraced affectionately by Schnee, and Shin received an impact that was far stronger than expected. It seems that the outstanding stats, even among his support characters, was not for show. As expected, he almost yelled out "Gofuu!!" but barely endured it.

"Sc-Schnee?"

"Don't you have something to say?"

Embraced tightly, Shin's spine almost screamed in pain. Even if the question was asked abruptly, in this situation where he was surrounded by enemies, he couldn't think of anything.

"Um, sorry for neglecting you until nowAaa!?"

"That's not it."

"Gisiri"[6], the force emitted by her arms intensified.

"T-Thank you for protecting the store!?"

"That's not it."

The force from her arms grew further. It was not an apology, nor even gratitude.

What was it then? What does he need to say?

Shin frantically ran through his memories.

He recalled back to when he came into this world, the last thing that came into his mind was the expression of Schnee weeping and the place everyone once spent time together called 'Tsuki no Hokora', which she continued to protect.

[6] "Gisiri", probably sound of crunching

(Ah..I see)

From there, it became simple.

What was he really thinking about before, he wanted to laugh at himself.

These were words that he would say in the game, and he had to say them now.

He left the store, disappeared, and then came back.

The first thing he should have said――――

"…I'm home."

"Welcome back."

◆◆◆◆

"I'm home."

Schnee ended the hug with Shin after hearing these words.

There were no tears anymore in her eyes. It was the usual calm expression, that Shin knew well.

"I thought you wouldn't come home anymore."

"…Indeed. I also thought that I wouldn't meet you again."

He had understood this at the time he left the shop. If the death game was cleared, the data for both Tsuki no Hokora and the support characters would be deleted. He would never be able to meet Schnee, or her real side[7] again if that had happened.

Even though NPC's could only receive it in the program as an example, Shin felt that it was the parting that was painful.

It was very difficult to express it in words.

No love and affection. The friendship would also be different.

More data, it could be said she was less than a human being. It was too complex, and personally Shin didn't properly understand it either.

"Kyuu~"

A cry that lost strength, for the two people, resounded in the serious atmosphere. When Shin turned his eyes upward, he saw the figure of an exhausted Yuzuha above his head.

Apparently, by keeping the barrier up, it seemed to have reached its limit somehow. The barrier shattered, and they noticed the Skull Faces pouring in toward them.

"Though there is a lot to talk about, let's get this situation under control for the time being."

"Well. I had forgotten about it a little because of our reunion after such a long time."

[7] When the game turned reality

“Kuu~”

While smiling wryly at Yuzuha’s bark that said, “I will leave the rest to you~”, the two people faced the Skull Faces.

“The first blow. I want to execute something big.”

“Let’s do it. Now is just the right time.”

Shin said with a broad grin, and Schnee, with a pleasant smile, laughed. Then they held their hands up toward the sky.

“The manifestation for one to become pure.”

“The manifestation for one that becomes eternal.”

They invoked a magic system skill that was exclusive to cooperation.

Only 2 or more players, or support characters, were able to use it.

The name was ――――

“Sanctuary!!”

The chant melted the darkness.

And immediately the effect was visible in the sky above the whole area of the plains.

An enormous magic formation was drawn in the night sky.

Shin and Schnee. It could be said that no one in this world could rival these two people’s cooperation skills. That effect was more than enough to exceed the usage of skills of ordinary skill users by far.

Before the Skull Faces reached Shin, light shined from the heavens.

It cut the darkness, illuminated the earth, and the light cleared away the world’s impurity in the plains as the ones that were wriggling were purified without mercy. That light spread temporarily even into the veil of night, and it shone upon the whole plains as if the sun had suddenly appeared.

“AAaaaaa――――…”

Although various individual Skull Faces were hit by the light, most became sparkling demon essences and vanished. But as expected, the Lord wasn’t killed it seems. Though the unpleasant voice resounded throughout the plains, the moment the Skull Faces sprang out from the ground, they were exposed to the light of purification and disappeared instantly.

The two people’s magic power, which fueled the magic formation, kept pouring out as it was maintained for several seconds without fading away, it continued shining upon the ground with a powerful and gentle light. Under such conditions, it seemed that the Skull Faces couldn’t even act properly. The red markers that were swept away from the map were reflected in Shin’s field of vision, and a beautiful field was able to be perceived.

“Now then, since the nuisances are all gone, let’s move onto the elimination of the main culprit.”

“Does Master know the cause of this phenomenon?”

“Ah, it was caused by the monster named Lord Skull Face. Though I saw it for the first time just now, do you know anything about it?”

“…No, I too just heard of it now for the first time.”

Shin thought Schnee, who spent a long time in this world, would know something, but Schnee didn’t have any idea someway or another.

Since the Skull Faces disappeared, there was nothing that blocked the way to the Lord anymore.

They checked their equipment quickly and ran toward the target. Yuzuha had become completely energetic due to the recovery effect of 【Sanctuary】, and watched their surroundings while on top of Shin’s head.

Shin would have liked to hand over 『Blue Moon』 to Schnee, but it was already given over to Tiera, so instead a powerful anti-Lord ninja katana and dagger were handed over. Though the main job of Schnee was a Kunoichi(a female version of a ninja), she was able to equip any weapon she liked such as a ninja katana and dagger, because there was no equipment restriction on weapons due to her job. Most players were satisfied if their support character could use at most 2 or 3 types. However, Schnee was the support character of Shin, so unfortunately only 2 or 3 types of weapon mastery was out of the question.

She held the ninja katana in her right hand, the dagger in her left, and ran at full speed alongside Shin towards the Lord.

“I saw it.”

They ran through the plains with overwhelming speed, and the two arrived at the place where the Lord was. Now, due to the downpour of the light, demon essence flickered from the whole body of the Lord. It was kneeling on one knee, and the armor, which covered its whole body, was cracked in several places. Its HP gauge was about half-full. Great damage was already dealt to it even though they hadn’t attacked it directly, due to the powerful skill Shin and Schnee released together, which at the same time was its weak point.

“GGUUUuuuuu…”

It looked down at the two people while roaring. The demon-flames that lit up the interior of the skeleton, now in this situation, emitted an ominous light. As expected from a monster whose level exceeded 800, the pressure it exerted could not be neglected.

“I wanted to ask it various questions, but it seems that it can’t talk.”

Shin muttered in front of the Lord again. From the beginning, he didn’t expect that he could talk to it directly, but the monster itself didn’t exist in the game, so he observed its whole body in the hope that it might shed some light on information that he didn’t know.

Its appearance gave off the impression of an upgraded King class Skull Face, although it was tattered. Including the information from 【Analyze】, it was still of the higher kind of Skull Face.

“Either way, since the start, it was an opponent that must be defeated.”

“Indeed…I’m about to begin.”

“Roger.”

Following Schnee’s response, the Lord, which was preparing a counter attack, was attacked.

The Lord's hand reached out and grasped a deep dark-colored greatsword out of thin air, and unleashed a powerful slash at the two people who broke through the front. Towards the blow that cut through the air, Shin stepped forward and readied the long katana to cross blades.

Due to the sudden acceleration and weight of the long katana, combined with Shin's flashy physical strength, the middle part of the Lord's greatsword collided and clashed against his katana.

When the steel frames collided, a thunderous sound was emitted. The Lord barely managed to keep its hand on the greatsword, which had bent backwards as a result of the clash. Schnee, who held two blades, prepared to approach the almost defenseless body of the Lord.

Sword system martial arts skill 【Blade Breaker】, suddenly appeared.

It was a skill that was highly effective against an opponent that was resistant to slashing attacks. Shin gave Schnee the 《Mythology》 grade ninja katana 『Lazuline Flame』, and the dagger 『Scarlet Flame』. Two flame colors, red and blue, left a trail while the two blades drew an arc through the air. Every time the armor of the Lord was smashed, the interior was exposed.

Inside, the broken armor was filled with a tar-like black liquid. It pulsated as if the thing itself had purpose. At the same time, as she was crushing the armor, it stretched toward Schnee.

"Uh!"

Schnee, who sensed the impending crisis in the form of a black tentacle, gave up the chase and retreated momentarily. The black tentacle that approached her was repelled by the two swords, and she withdrew from the tentacle range.

"Its attack is like the Gel Bison's."

When he saw the black tentacle emerging from the Skull Face, Shin was reminded of the monster in the plains, the Gel Bison. Was this because the Gel Bison was turned into demon essence and absorbed by the black orb? It immediately came into his mind.

(Don't tell me, it's able to use the abilities of all the monsters it absorbed?)

It was an assumption that he didn't want to be correct, if possible. Undead monsters had many things that resembled a unique characteristic, and almost none of them relied on endurance to fight. Gel Bison did not really have much of a special attack, but Shin was worried about the monster that was absorbed first, the Pecker Hollow.

"No need to hold back."

Confirming that Schnee had withdrawn, he gathered magic power in his left hand.

In the following moment, crimson flames were fired toward the Lord from Shin's hand.

It was fired without chanting, flame system magic skill 【Flare Volcano】.

A roaring flame that exceeded the Lord's height by dozens of mels ran through it in a flash, as it directly hit the Lord who couldn't even properly move anymore.

It was burnt by two different kinds; the light of purification and the crimson flame, and the Lord was destroyed soon after it raised a death cry. The flames were extinguished after a while, and they left a trace of muddy melted earth from the high temperature that extended horizontally in a straight line.

“Is it over?”

He fired it with the intention of defeating it. However, Shin felt a strong sense of something being wrong, for the ‘strangely too quick’ end of the act.

Schnee might also have felt the same, as she didn’t let her guard down.

Shin, who carried 『Hamon Hirumaki』 on his shoulder, activated the detection system skill to the max. The demon essence in the atmosphere became dense as a result of the battle, and they concentrated on the flow of demon essence that they didn’t sense until now. Thereupon, they noticed the unnatural flow of the surrounding demon essence. The demon essence of the Skull Faces that had fallen didn’t dissolve in the air, but was absorbed into the earth. Not just one or two bodies, but it could be said that it was almost all of them.

“…Beneath us!”

The moment Shin turned his attention to the underground, a large shaking hit the 2 people.

A small red marker appeared on the map at the same time that Shin looked at it. It’s size increased along with the earthquake, until finally, it’s size exceeded that of the Lord.

“Master.”

“Ah, it looks like this is it’s true form.”

A black orb pierced through the ground and appeared simultaneously with Shin’s words. Unlike the time when he saw it earlier, this black orb had red lines drawn upon it; traveling like blood vessels and pulsating like a heart.

“The one that came up a while ago was just an empty shell, huh?”

That explained why the Lord fell so quickly. Apparently, the empty shell was just a decoy so it could gather the demon essences in the entire plains for the main body.

After the appearance of the black orb, a noticeably larger shake occurred. Gigantic arms emerged in sequence, with which it was even possible to grab a King class Skull Face. 3 pairs, or 6 arms, gripped the ground and dragged its main body out.

Its head was decorated with twisted horns, its body was a collection of Skull Faces, its lower body had the impression of a crustacean[8] with 4 pairs of legs, and it had 5 scorpion-like tails.

It might still have obtained the ability of the Pecker Hollow, too. Its total length exceeded 20 mels, so judging from that standard, it was different from a conventional Skull Face.

As the orb was absorbed and it fused with the gigantic body, a demon-fire lit-up inside its eye sockets.

“GAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA――――――――!!!!!!”

The roar emitted was also accompanied by a shock-wave. Though Shin and Schnee were exceptions, it would not be strange if whole bodies of average adventurers were blown away just from the wind pressure.

“Seriously?”

“It’s look like it.”

[8] Crustacean – a type of crab

“If that’s the case, we should get serious too.”

Facing the Lord who issued its roar, Shin also changed his equipment. He selected the same equipment from when he challenged Origin before, using the shortcut system which registered a specific set, and changed his equipment instantaneously.

Deep crimson arm guards and leg guards covered his hands and legs, and a fluttering black long coat that had a muffler with red lightning streaks going down it appeared.

The scabbard of the 《Ancient》 grade katana,『True Moon』 was removed from its clasp, and the thumb of his left hand flexed out slightly so he could instantly draw out the katana.

With the change of equipment, Shin’s presence also changed with the new appearance.

Was it the equipment’s effect or that his focus changed? It gave off an overpowering feeling that wasn’t there a short while ago, due to the figure that was wrapped in red and black body armor.

The demon-flames, upon seeing Shin’s appearance and the glare from the two people, momentarily flickered in a big way. An intimidating feeling was given off by Shin, which was doubled due to the pressure received from his presence as well as from his new equipment set.

“…Let’s go.”

Loosening his katana for immediate use, his right hand was affixed to the handle.

He invoked 【Shukuchi】[9] silently, and instantly rushed into the Lord’s proximity.

The four arms swung toward Shin. Each held a jet black greatsword that was like solid darkness. It was clear that they possessed a heavy mass, and that was not a false impression as they each created a tornado in their wake.

The greatswords reached Shin first. The moment the greatswords entered the katana’s proximity, the handle vanished from the sheath and a red trail drew an arc in the air.

The four greatswords were intercepted despite only one sound reverberating. Shin jumped onto the Lord’s chest, as all the greatswords were repelled by the katana’s power.

The Lord was going to defend itself with its two remaining arms, but it felt a slight chill and right away re-routed one of its arms to over its head. Without any pause, metals clashed, and a sound reverberated as large sparks instantly flew.

It was an attack from Schnee’s 『Lazuline Flame』, an attack that hit the Lord’s blind spot. It made use of a strong point of ninjas, as the highest rank of assassins, as it was not easy to exchange attacks from the blind spot. However, undead monsters originally didn’t depend on senses. That reaction couldn’t have existed without the Lord’s perception skill that was strengthened outside of specifications. Though Schnee objectively understood the ability itself from that movement, it was also enough to understand just how much the Lord deviated from the standard of monsters called Skull Face.

“After all, it really is different from the existing monsters, huh?”

She landed using the recoil from the blow exchange, and analyzed the opponent’s ability while exchanging blows with the tails from the blind spot.

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[9] teleportation power that’s capable of moving vast distances in a single step

The pursuit of Schnee was slow due to Shin who landed on its chest. Though the Lord tried to intercept Shin with its other arm, the previous four arms and the one greatsword left couldn't catch or do anything to Shin. The remaining greatsword was broken by a single blow from 【Blade Breaker】, and the Lord retreated several mels from that aftermath. The single blow from Shin, who was no longer going easy, became an unbelievable offensive power that corresponding to the stats that rose, showed the overwhelming force difference.

Even Schnee, who knew of Shin's ability well, was astonished at that power.

"Swish!!"

The Lord, which while retreating earlier prepared its posture began a pursuit of Shin. The Lord, which had lost its weapons earlier, crossed its arms in a defense posture. When the katana swung down toward the Lord with its arms guarded, it created sparks as all of the arms were cut off and were blown away.

"GURUAAAAAAAA!!!!"

The tails approached with a war cry, and began attacking Shin in earnest. The four tails had saw-like blades attached, and although they struck out from every direction, Shin jumped toward the Lord before the pointed ends arrived.

A strike from its arm was unleashed in desperation, but Shin evaded it with the martial arts movement skill 【Flying Shadow】 that enabled double jumps in the air, and so Shin came closer to the Lord. The destination, while he evaded, was the Lord's body; the location of the solar plexus in a human.

It could be said that the distance between the two was almost zero, the splendid gap for Shin was partly due to the differences in physique. And it was the place where the core of the Skull Face had just been absorbed. The Lord tried to gain some distance, but Shin had already prepared his attack prior to its action, and everything was too late.

"――――tsu!!"

A sharp exhale together with the katana swinging downward.

He unleashed the katana system martial art skill 【Mountain Cleaver】.

Even though he didn't have any firm footing in the air, the stroke from Shin showed perfection and thorough power.

The visual sword trails were a mix between red and black lines that penetrated the Lord's left shoulder from the air, went through the body, cut through one of the right legs that flew off, and left a deep cut in the ground from the aftermath.

"GIIIIIIIIIIAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!!!!!!!!!!"

The Lord screamed at the excessive damage. The slanted slash line had traveled through its body, and the black liquid along with its armor were torn as well. Although it was diverted from its core, Shin saw that about 1/5 of the black orb was cut.

"It retreated, huh?"

The core vanished from view immediately. Somehow, it seemed to be able to move freely inside the body to some extent. As he promptly thought about a countermeasure, ignoring the Lord who screamed, he landed on the ground and moved in pursuit without mercy.

He slashed at the Lord's right legs consecutively to destroy its posture.

The slashing storm was done with a speed that left an afterimage. In addition, whenever Shin's katana left a flash, different parts of the Lord's body fell.

Katana system martial art skill 【Kasane Dachi】[10].

This skill generated, at random, multiple slashing attacks that each possessed a similar power as the individual slashes. It cut the internal parts of the Lord, which also caused the armor to fall off in pieces.

This skill was able to attack several enemies at the same time, as the larger the offensive ability the user possessed, the more its power increased altogether. It seemed like he had already gained total control of the skill, 【Kasane Dachi】, as each of the internal slashing attacks were already at a fatal offensive power.

"GI…A…aa…"

Destructive power was put into each of the slashing attacks that one by one were rampaging inside the Lord. The Lord was barely alive at the time it received the 【Mountain Cleaver】 and it also did not have enough power remaining to support itself.

All of the tails had already been cut off by Schnee and were blown away, leaving no possibility of resistance.

The body of the Lord swelled with the rising internal pressure. As additional invisible slashing attacks were generated inside the body due to【Kasane Dachi】, that 'energy' wanted to exit.

He didn't overlook the core even though it was not found yet. The body that was hit by the tempest of slashing attacks was not a safe place anymore. The only destination the core could escape to was the head.

"It's the end!"

He kicked the ground and jumped.

[10] Thickness of the Long Katana

Then he took an overhead stance with 『True Moon』, with the blade clad in red lightning, above the top of the Lord's head.

Katana technique lightning combined skill 【Moon Arc : Thunder Flash】.

First of all, lightning was formed around the red blade as it swung toward the head. Next, the lightning on the katanas main body 『True Moon』 sliced through the skull of the Lord, and lightning struck from inside of it. The red lightning spread and blew away the demon-flames from within the eye sockets. The lightning strikes destroyed the head completely, as it went along the neck and the whole body of the Lord burnt completely as if it was not enough.

"…Tsu! …tsu…"

No screaming came out though its body was roasted.

The single attack from Shin sliced the orb together with the core that escaped to the head, and completely disappeared due to the additional lightning strikes. Naturally a Skull Face without its core would vanished in a short time. The Lord though, didn't disappear right away because of that gigantic body, but its body was already but a corpse's mere remains.

"Tsu…tsu…tsu!!"

Despite the crumbling body of the Lord, it stretched out its remaining arm toward Shin in its final moment.

"Master!!"

"Wait."

Schnee shouted at Shin who didn't move while seeing the state of the Lord. Schnee, who was rushing toward Shin, stopped at his command, and Shin fixed his eyes on the Lord.

The figure had neither hostility, the thirst of blood, nor the sense of intimidation that existed when he fought it a little while ago. The Lord that was extending out its arm towards Shin, seemed to be trying to grip something that was totally out of reach.

"(So…Wo…Ni)"

"Eh!?"

The voice reached Shin's ear. Though it was a distorted and had a twisted pitch, it was certainly the words of a person.

However, soon after having uttered it, the Lord dissolved into the atmosphere and become demon essence, just like the other Skull Faces. A huge jewel with a diameter of about 50 cemels remained at the place where the Lord had been.

"Master! Are you alright!?"

"Oh, I'm fine. It's no problem."

He soothed Schnee, who rushed at him in a panicked state, and thought about the words he heard just a while ago in his mind.

(In the end, I could hardly understand anything. although it was indeed an enemy.)

He paid more attention to the jewel while having a hard time not showing disappointment on his face. It was certainly the highest grade jewel of the first-class. He collected it for the time being just in case it might become a clue to something.

When he turned his attention to the map, the markers for the monsters, which had escaped from the battle with the two, that he was able to perceive, seemed to have disappeared. There was a little individual monster which escaped the purification too, but it seemed to have faded away with the Lord's defeat. Either way, the Lord was the cause of this disturbance.

The light that illuminated the surroundings was weakened when Shin confirmed it with the map. As he might have expected, the effect of 【Sanctuary】 seemed to gradually stop. When the light completely faded away, the surroundings became dark, although it was still lit by the moonlight.

And, a big change, as a result of defeating the Lord was visible on the plains. Though he didn't see it because of the strong light of purification, the demon essence drifted smokily up to the sky from the whole plains. With the spectacle of demon essence floating up, the light seemed to dissolve into the night sky.

The scene that happened over the whole plains caused the surrounding knights and adventurers to remain on lookout.

The demon light that soared up high at the same time as the holy light that repelled the darkness faded out into the shades of the night.

There were many people in awe of that scene, which was never seen until now.

"It seems like it's over."

"It looks like it. In a while, it will be returned to the original plains, I guess."

"…Should we return home?"

"Yes."

Without saying "To where?", the two people began to walk as they watched the light of the demon essences disappear.

He braced himself, during the battle earlier, to talk to Schnee the same way as he did in the past or in the game, but an indescribable atmosphere settled between the two people as soon as the tension was resolved.

The time separated was short to Shin, but long to Schnee.

They felt awkward around each other, but they gradually became talkative. In order to fill the time that had passed, they continued to talk.

As the investigation team that consisted of knights and adventurers came quickly, the two people had already left the plains.

Chapter 3

Shin and Schnee entered the forest at a quick pace.

While avoiding the adventurers who were moving into the plains, they turned their route toward Tsuki no Hokora. On the way, because the set-up base had been abandoned, he stopped, broke it down, and collected it all including the interception item. Wilhelm seemed to have given priority to evacuating and since Wilhelm wouldn't do such a foolish move like collecting items in that situation, it was only to be expected that the base was neglected.

Shin's feelings wouldn't be hurt or even bruised if the items themselves were left. He removed them in this situation, because there was a danger of them changing into a permanent fort without its owner. In fact, many Skull Faces might have already fallen victim to it, as there were signs that the interception magic had activated. They seemed to have been individuals, those killed here, because it was not very far from the plains.

"Now that I think about it, didn't you receive a request? Is it completed?"

Shin asked Schnee as he finished collecting the items.

"It is not quite finished yet, but my job is almost done."

"Job?"

"It's the safekeeping and distribution of the items. My work now is to manage all of it to prevent infringement, since multiple countries had joined together to form a joint military unit."

"…Is this perhaps related to the recent uproar?

"Of course."

"Seriously…"

Shin sighed. Although it was not intentional, he had meddled in another large affair again. He was utterly ignorant toward serious matters, he didn't realize that the countries had started working on calming the situation down. Although he was a little regretful that he had done it in such a flashy manner, the damage was already done.

While asking Schnee about what kind of situation it was in detail, he wrecked his brain to recall if there were any eyewitnesses. After grunting "uh-huh" for a while, he concluded that as far as he could tell, no one could have seen him, except for Schnee. Even the green markers he had protected should not have seen him or which way the fireballs came from, given how massive the Skull Faces were.

"Well, never mind about that. So, does Schnee not have to show up for the distribution? I think you should at least go to the meeting place or should I say headquarters for you to finish your request."

"It will be alright for a while. Even if I distribute it evenly, it doesn't work on the basis of first-come, first-served. I am supposed to do the allocation after all the corps have gathered. It will take about one week at the earliest, until there can be a meeting. If I think about the range of each unit's progress, there is no problem even if I don't hurry that much."

As he had given up on thinking about the eyewitness case, because nothing could be done any further, he confirmed Schnee's timeline. If she was serious, Schnee could travel faster than the others, so she could afford to spend some time with Shin

Whether it was Shin or Schnee, there were a lot of things they wanted to ask each other. While heading toward Tsuki no Hokora, they decided to explain to each other their own situation.

"Since I have a lot of questions I want to ask, you can ask me anything before that."

Shin decided to accept questions from Schnee first, considering the longer time she had spent here. Actually, it still hadn't even passed one month since Shin came into this world, so he might only be able to answer a little.

"I understand. Then I will ask several things that I've been anxious about for the time being."

"Go ahead."

Schnee asked Shin three things.

First, where was he until now?

Second, why did his combat ability rise?

Third, what will he do from now on?

"Then the first one. About where I was until now. To tell you the truth, I personally haven't even been here for one month, today, since I went to the last dungeon."

"What do you mean by that?"

"It's true. Remember the time when everyone saw off me to challenge the Origin?"

"Yes."

"I defeated the Origin and it should have been the end accordingly. But afterwards, in the deepest depth of that dungeon, 【Gate of the Otherworld】, there was a big door in the boss' room. It opened soon after the Origin fell."

Shin recalled that moment while explaining it to Schnee. The scene where the heavy door he thought was just a decoration opened up while making a sound.

"Door…?"

"Yes. After that, I lost consciousness, and before I realized it, I'm laying down on a grassy field. After that, I went to Tsuki no Hokora and heard the outline story. I was really surprised when I heard that more than 500 years had passed. That's the reason why I haven't been around for 500 years."

"So that's the reason, huh?"

Schnee seemed to understand the situation as she listened to what Shin said. It was different from the time when they met earlier; she had an expression of relief, like her chest wasn't constricted anymore.

"Schnee?"

"Fufufu, it's nothing."

“Then, that’s good.”

Though Shin had a question mark dancing above his head because Schnee, for some reason, was in a good mood, he didn’t think about it too much because it was boorish to be a wet blanket; especially when with someone who is in such a joyful mood.

Now then, for the next one. My abilities and stats went up because of the titles I acquired after defeating the Origin.”

“Titles? What kind of titles?”

“There are three of them. 【Limit Breaker】, 【Accomplished One】 and 【Liberator】. The first two are related to the growth of my stats. Though I heard them for the first time when I got them, do you remember hearing any of them before?”

No, I’ve just heard all of those titles for the first time as well. What kind of effect do they have?”

Shin explained each of the titles’ effect in answer to Schnee’s question. Even though there was not a stat raise for the title 【Liberator】, since he felt like it had some kind of meaning, he explained it in one go. (Editor’s note: 【Liberator】 – Immune to all binding and restriction effects, be it items or magic skills. 【Accomplished One】 – All ability points doubled. 【Limit Breaker】 – The upper limit for all stats has been removed, and all stats will rise according to how many ability points were discarded prior to limit removal.)

“…That’s absurd, isn’t it.”

“Totally. I also thought it was a joke until I looked at the stats.”

Shin too, could understand the feeling of Schnee who was at a loss for words. If a chosen one acquired these titles, the power balance of the world would likely collapse.

“However, I think it is not necessary to worry about it to that extent.”

“Why is that?” Shin asked.

“It is the acquisition requirement. Although monsters exist in this world, the phenomenon of re-spawning in the same place with completely identical unique monsters doesn’t happen. I don’t think there is a person who can meet the acquisition requirement anywhere else, because the Origin might be the only one. Also, the dungeon that Master went to has completely disappeared.”

“I see. That does make it impossible.”

According to Schnee, several days after Shin left to conquer the dungeon, Shin’s support characters became exasperated when Shin didn’t come back, so they gathered together and followed their Master’s path. However, not even a shadow or shape was there, even the outlines were gone.

When they stopped the search temporarily and went back to Tsuki no Hokora, the support characters of other players were making a racket saying, “My Master has disappeared!”. Schnee heard it and was convinced that Shin had cleared the dungeon. But they still doubted that he disappeared with the other players, and started to investigate the story on their own. She also thought of the possibility that Shin was still in this world, just like her and the others were.

However, the earth’s crust changed, and a state of confusion followed on the continent afterwards. While helping the people who were in trouble, Schnee remained in Tsuki no Hokora, and the rest of his support characters separated to continue searching for Shin, or moved to protect their own race.

Somehow, Shin had expected that they would do that.

“But wait? Didn’t the Dusk of the Majesty occur right after I defeated Origin?”

Shin had noticed that there was an unusual time lag for the support character to make a racket.

“Master, if you think about the former location of Tsuki no Hokora, of course it would take some time for the information to circulate. Where did you think it was?”

“…True.”

Schnee was saying that since numerous boss monsters existed in the area near Tsuki no Hokora, one could say it was a remote outpost. In a situation where the support characters couldn’t use the chat function, information couldn’t be shared right away.

“That’s why I believe that a person who has Master’s titles or at least similar titles will likely never appear. If such a person does appear, well, please do something about it.”

“So it falls to me, huh?”

“Of course. Only someone of Masters’ standing can oppose them, if a person with a power similar to our class obtains those titles. Therefore, I leave all of it to you Master.”

“Well, that is right.”

The stats double, so that mean that the higher the original stats were, the stronger the titleholder would became. If a chosen one with a high ability obtained the title 【Accomplished】 or in even【Limit Breaker】, even Schnee wouldn’t stand a chance against that person.

However, since there were strict requirements for the acquisition conditions, and Shin had beyond maxed stats, Schnee believed that the appearance of any enemy that would be able to get a solid hit in, was very unlikely in the present state.

“By the way, Schnee.”

“Yes, what is it?”

“That, ‘Master’ calling, can you do something about it?”

While talking, Shin by all means felt bothered. Though he didn’t mind it during the game, simply because she was an NPC, it was very awkward when she called him that in the current situation.

“Is there a problem when I’m calling Master, ‘Master’?”

“No, there’s no…problem, but isn’t Schnee famous now? If such a person calls me ‘Master’, it will absolutely turn into an uproar.”

“Mu, that’s certainly the case, but…”

Shin well understood the influence of Tsuki no Hokora. And, it was certainly Schnee who made it so. It was impossible that nothing would happen if a person such as Schnee appeared to have a master whom she looked up to.

“Don’t you think so? I would especially like to avoid becoming the center of the attention. Therefore, I request that you do not call me ‘Master’.”

“But, then what should I call you?”

“Eh? Wouldn’t using my name normally be enough?”

“Uh!? T-That…”

For some reason, the surprised Schnee looked downward with her mouth mumbling. After a short time, she raised her face to stare straight at Shin as if she had made up her mind.

“T-Then…Shin.”

“Ah, there we go.”

Schnee said it in a whisper. Her cheeks were dyed a faint, pink color and her ears were bright red.

As for Shin, he had quite the response of ‘Eh, what is that reaction!?’ and strangely enjoyed the embarrassed feeling.

Schnee’s reaction was certainly seen in a lot of mangas and games. Though Shin well knew of this situation, the problem was whether or not he could return the reaction directly.

Though he was not well-versed, it didn’t mean that he had never experienced love before.

To tell the truth, Schnee had never changed her expressions to be this shy in the game, so the very action of calling his own name with somewhat upturned eyes was terrific, and considerably very ――――― ‘Moe’.

“How should I say this…that has destructive power…”

“Eh!?”

“No, it’s nothing. Yeah, it’s really nothing. From now on, please call me Shin.”

“I understand. Then, after this I will call you S-Shin.”

Schnee tried to act calm, but the flushed cheeks and ears vividly expressed her state of mind. Shin, who knew her usual calm appearance, was worrying about the too extreme gap.

(Is this the true ‘Gap Moe’? Indeed…the destructive power is worthy of comparison with the gap of Celica-san, which I felt in the guild.)

After that, they walked without saying anything to each other for a while. After confirming that the ears of Schnee, who was fidgety, returned to their former color using side glances, Shin resumed the conversation.

“Ah, though we got off topic, should we continue with the questions?”

“Yes, I showed an unsightly side. But I’m alright now.”

Though he felt that her voice still sounded somewhat excited, he ignored it, because the conversation would not advance if he pointed it out.

“Let me see…Errr, I’ve already talked about my abilities. Then about the last question. First of all, I intend to go around collecting information around here and there after this.”

“Information?”

“Yes, first I will learn about this world. For the time being, I have investigated a little in the kingdom’s library, and I intend to go to the Sacred Land later. Has Schnee been there before?”

“Yes. But because it was only a simple internal investigation, I still don’t know what’s going on in the center of the city.”

“Is that so?”

Whether the key to returning to his former world lies there or not. The only way is to go there directly.

“Um…Shin.”

“Hmm?”

Schnee called out to Shin, who was thinking on whether he wanted to go the Sacred Land next. Her voice had completely changed from a while ago and was a little bit stiff.

“If you find the way…are you going to stop and return?”

“…Ah.”

He went silent for a while and replied. Though he hesitated on how to answer Schnee’s in this state, it wouldn’t change the conclusion even if he lied. He didn’t mean to give up if there was still a possibility.

And there was no meaning in vague answers, either.

He didn’t want to lie.

“That should be expected, huh?”

“…Sorry.”

“No, When I listened to your talk earlier, I already thought you wanted to do so.”

Schnee nodded while showing an innocent smile, seemingly understanding in some respect. At the expression that resembled a look of relief, Shin felt a faint sense of incongruity.

“Hey, Schnee. How much do you remember from the game?”

Shin asked, in an attempt to change the sense of incongruity.

“Everything.”

“Everything..?”

“Yes. From the time I descended down from that place to be together with you.”

Everything until this very moment now.

◆◆◆◆

The moment when he ran through a field for beginners.

The time when he was depressed due to losing in PvP.

The eagerness to improve his stats.

The friends he had in the guild.

The loud laugh after defeating a large army of players.

The dungeon where he risked his life.

The tears he shed for not being able to protect someone's life.

The assassin's dagger he wielded.

The promise he made to a certain person.

The last time seeing his back.

"——I remember it all."

Schnee said while calmly putting her hand above her chest.

"Although it was useless to ask you to forget it too, please say…"

"I'm not saying~"

The smiling face was too radiant as she answered bluntly. It was a facial expression that he hadn't seen when she was an NPC, and when his fellow made this sort of face, Shin became a little glad.

"But, if that was the case. Though you only talked in pre-set sentences, were you in a state of awareness?"

"No, it was after Shin and the others entered the situation known as the death game, that a type of self-consciousness became clear. Until then, it felt like watching a moving picture. It is very hard to explain it, but it's like looking at myself from a bird's-eye view."

Though it was her memory, Schnee said that it was like the memory of another person. To be frank, he didn't understand it well, because he thought it was rather painful that her consciousness became aware while in a state where her body moved without permission, so he didn't question it further.

"I see. In short, you know all about the logout stuff and the other things beyond that point as well."

It was possible to say that that might be the reason why she had retained her memories of the game.

"Yes. At that time, it was because all of the adventurers sometimes used those words after the life and death fights began. If I am not mistaken, another world, different from this one, is the real world, right?"

"That is correct…so anyways, after I left, you guys searched for me and then separated, huh?"

"…Yes."

While smiling as if she had been in trouble, Schnee affirmed it.

The last fight of the death game. If Shin won the fight, Schnee and the others would disappear. If Shin lost, Schnee and the others would lose their master. Either way, it couldn't become a happy ending. Therefore, they took several actions, due the mysterious situation where they didn't disappear even though Shin should have won.

“If only you all could have told me beforehand, though that might not be possible to say.”

“Then, wouldn’t Shin have been troubled by it? You had to do the best that you could at that time.”

“Is that so…”

Though it was decided that it was okay and he had been in high spirits when he left Tsuki no Hokora; when he learned about the circumstances that his support characters had concealed among themselves, Shin felt miserable.

Nevertheless, even if he had known, he would not have doubted himself, and would have done what he did, so he did not say anything.

“In those days, independent action was not completely possible yet, and the talk of freedom, like the present day, was more or less not even imaginable. Either way, it would have been impossible to talk about.”

“Well now that you mention it, when the death game began, I thought it was weird that the NPC’s were strangely acting like human beings. Now knowing that it was self-awareness, I realize ‘Ah! so that’s it’.”

“You have a difficult personality as always, Shin.”

“Shut up!…Leave me alone.”

He muttered at Schnee, who smiled wryly while he was embarrassed. He was pondering his past actions, thinking about if or when the programs had began self-consciousness or something, wondering ‘Did I treat them decently?’, as Schnee’s remark actually hit the target.

“Well, you would have gone to battle even if you had known, Shin.”

“…That’s probably true.”

Compared to the lives of ten thousand humans, the support characters were no more than data. Even if the data had been somewhat self-consciousness, it was still not comparable.

“Besides, didn’t you make a promise?”

“…Yeah.”

Even though it wasn’t much, many people returned to reality.

In fact, it was due to that promise which Shin had exchanged with a certain person.

Since they knew about it for sure, neither Schnee or the other support characters would have said anything.

“Now then, let’s put a stop to this solemn atmosphere. Especially since we are able to meet again after so much effort and a long wait.”

“…That’s right. “What am I saying now, it’s quickly become depressing! Let’s stop it!”

In order to completely change the mood that had become depressing, Schnee behaved cheerfully and clapped her hands in an exaggerated manner. Shin also joined in by raising his voice.

“First of all, to celebrate the reunion, let’s go all out with a party. If it’s about food ingredients, I have a lot left in the Item Box.”

“Let’s do it. Please let me demonstrate my cooking skill that I have raised over the years.”

“By the way, what is your cooking level?”

“It became IX about one month ago.”

“Seriously!?”

Shin was surprised that it had grown to the level where she could cook even a high level monster. Even if she made the lowest grade meal, a simple soup, with this level it transformed into a dish that generated a lot of bonus stats. It was said that a skilled cook was found to be as useful as a skilled blacksmith in major guilds. There were enormous bonuses when a dish was made using rare ingredients. If one of two players with the same level, job, and about the same ability ate the dish, the player who ate it would end up with a complete victory in combat.

And Rokuten, where Shin had been a member, was able to overpower other player’s skills and stats because there was a cook skill of level X. So, with a dish that gave a bonus of temporary adding to their maxed stats, they were able to exceed the limit, though it was only by a little.[11]

By the way, only Shin and the other members of Rokuten, who had reached the maximum stats, knew of that information. All of the members, including Shin, started to notice the increase in damage from the bonus effects, and the information was not circulated in order for only the six members of Rokuten to benefit from it.

“Though I’m not like Cook-sama, you can anticipate it.”

“Yosh! Leave the ingredients to me!”

While expressing “Fufufu”, he took a look at the ingredients in the Item Box. Even though the ingredients were stored since the time it was just a game, he himself had already confirmed that it was okay to eat them.

“By the way Shin, may I ask one more question aside from the questions earlier.”

“Yes? What is it?”

Schnee asked him the question while looking at the top of Shin’s head.

“That one, what is it?”

“This one? …Ah.”

He realized what she was talking about.

It was Yuzuha who was sleeping soundly on top of Shin’s head.

“Though since only its name and level are seen, did you use Taming on it?”

“Yeah, there were some minor circumstances, and we made a partner contract due to them. Its name is Yuzuha. I will be honest since it is Schnee. It’s race is the Element Tail.”

“…When I looked at the tails, I thought it was not a mere Demon Fox race. So it is an Element Tail, huh?”

[11] Even though their stats were maxed at 999, with that food they could go above 1000

Schnee became stiff momentarily, right after she heard the race of Yuzuha. But she promptly regained herself as if she thought, ‘Well, it is Shin after all.’

“You found out through the tail?”

“Perhaps Shin didn’t notice it? I could understand that it was not an ordinary Demon Fox because there are 3 tails.”

Shin tilted his head due to what Schnee was saying. There should be no such feature in Yuzuha’s tail.

“…Three…tails?”

Then he suddenly noticed it. Now that he thought about it, there was a sense of tails hitting his ears and the back of his head.

First, he grabbed a tail with his right hand. Yep, nice and soft.

“Hmm.”

Next, he grabbed a tail with his left hand. This one was also fluffy.

“…Hmm.”

Finally, he concentrated on the sense of touch on the back of his head. There was a faint light touch.

“…Hmm.”

For the time being, he released the tails from his hands, gripped the body of Yuzuha from above his head and brought it in front of his face.

“Kuu?”

“They had certainly become three.”

Yuzuha woke up after being moved from overhead. And then the tails that had increased to 3 swung side by side accordingly.

When looking at its level, it had unexpectedly gone over 400.

“…Well, I guess its level rose too much.”

Even if the former level was over 200, it had gone up too suddenly. It hadn’t killed many monsters while they were power-leveling Rashia. And it was indeed impossible for it to level up almost 200 levels just from the fight with the Lord.

“I think something else happened.”

Shin thought that there was something that he personally didn’t know. The growth extent of a monster partner or something similar was something he had heard from a member of Rokuten; Kashmir. Therefore, he understood that such a straightforward growth was nearly impossible.

The first thing that came to Shin’s mind was that a hidden quest had been completed when the requirements were fulfilled. He had experienced it several times during the game, so he had grown accustomed to it. If he remembered correctly, there was a quest with a monster partner, too.

“Schnee, how do you take up a hidden quest in this world?”

“As far as I know, I haven’t heard talks of any such quests being generated. The world voice I had heard before, it too was never heard from again after Shin vanished. And I have not heard of any story like this either.”

The world voice Schnee mentioned was probably the announcement system in THE NEW GATE.

Unlike the quest which could be accepted in a guild, when the conditions for the generated hidden quest were met, the player was notified of what kind of quest it was via an announcement as the hidden quest began.

In this case, since there was no sort of announcement at all, Shin didn’t notice Yuzuha’s level up. Also, judging from Schnee’s story, the system feature of announcements was likely gone.

“Still, for the number of tails to increase, is this because the level rose?”

Shin spoke while facing Yuzuha.

Because there were no Element Tail kit’s in the game era, he was uncertain about how they grew up.

It might unexpectedly just be a mere growth spurt rather than a quest and the like.

“Kua~…Good morning, Master.[12]”

Without knowing that Shin was worried, Yuzuha yawned loudly… and greeted him like it was only natural.

“Wait a minute, Yuzuha! Did you reach the point where you are able to talk?”

“Kuu? When the black things disappeared, my head felt refreshed.”

“Black things?”

When he heard about the black things, he was thought of the Lord’s core that was sliced in half just a while ago. If he recalled back, it was only Skull Faces that had surrounded the Shinto shrine where Yuzuha was rescued from. And it was not strange to regard the Lord that appeared this time as the boss.

“It was black, roundish, and inside the bones. And Master cut it.”

“It’s the Lord’s core, no mistake about it.”

It seemed like it matched Shin’s expectations. There was some kind of relation that connected Yuzuha and the Lord, Shin’s intuition as a gamer told him so.

Was some portion of its power absorbed? Or was it sealed? It was regrettable that he had no way of confirming it after defeating it.

“For now, you are prohibited from talking in public. Since ordinary Demon Foxes can’t talk.”

“Okay.”

“If it’s just the two of us, it should be fine, but don’t expose yourself to other people.”

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[12] Yuzuha says ‘aruji’

“Hmmm, then do I only talk directly into your mind?”

“Telepathy? If so, it should be fine.”

Since there was telepathy, it was still possible to communicate. It seemed that Yuzuha also understood it intuitively, as it nodded obediently.

“But Shin, since the number of tails have increased, will it still be known as a Little Fox?”

“That’s right…”

Actually, there were various types of Demon Fox races, and so naturally there were ones with multiple tails. Indeed, it was possible to say that that most of them had multiple tails.. But generally it became a slightly dangerous existence for a commoner if the number of tails exceeded 2.

As for Demon Fox races with 3 tails, there was Flame Tail, Tail Leader and so on. Even if it was young, their levels were still at least 250. They were not the kind of monster that one would just take as a pet in this world.

“Its still a child, so entering a country might be possible, but…”

“Well, it will become an adult sooner or later, too. That’s right…say, Yuzuha. Can’t you do things like transform?”

“Kuu? There are things that I’m able to do, and things I am not able to do.”

“Can you change the three tails into one?”

“Easy~”

Yuzuha said, while its three tails splendidly turned into a single tail with a pop sound.

“Oh!”

“That’s nice.”

Shin and Schnee both opened their eyes wide in surprise.

Rather than an illusion, they seemed to have really become one tail. Even touching it seemed natural.

“Is this good??”

“It’s okay. Won’t it make you tired?”

“It’s alright!”

“Then from now on, can you merge them into one tail in places where people can see? Because that will save us some trouble one way or another.”

“Yes, I can do that~”

Yuzuha agreed easily. It didn’t hide any resistance.

“…It was somehow solved easily.”

“Yeah, that’s true. If it’s like this, it won’t be discovered easily.”

Schnee too, assured. It seemed like Shin was relieved by this.

“Yuzuha is excellent?”

“Yes, yes, good job.”

“Kuu~~”

With Yuzuha held against his chest, he patted its head for its good job.

“…Cute!”

“Hmm?”

“Ha! It’s nothing.”

“…Do you want to pet it?”

“Sure!!”

Even though she was so strong, Schnee was still a woman and seemed to like cute things. Petting Yuzuha indeed felt really good, too.

“Still the same as ever, Shin never fails to surprise me.”

“Hmm?”

“No one has accomplished taming an Element Tail before.”

Schnee’s declaration contained something of amazement while stopping her petting. The Element Tail was set to be impossible to tame since the beginning of the game era. It was no wonder that she was surprised.

“You don’t look surprised while saying that though?”

“Well, since it’s Shin I’m really not surprised. No high level individual like you has ever tried doing that before.”

“Indeed. We, the Rokuten, weakened the opponent while going easy, even if the difficulty was high.”

Shin recalled. Having every attribute of magic, aided by strong physical attacks from its fangs and claws, it was a monster that had a nimble and agile nature which didn’t match its large body. Even the maxed stats players could not let their guard down. That was the original appearance of the Element Tail.

Yuzuha, which was curled up while being held by Shin’s arm, did not show such a threat at all.

“Kuu?”

“Yosh, let’s run at full speed now. In fact, there are some companions ahead of us. and they might cause an uproar soon.”

“If that’s the case, we better hurry. We might catch up in time.”

If someone thought about the travel speed of Shin and Schnee; they could easily overtake a horse that ran at full speed by a large margin. However, Wilhelm had the buff given by Shin, which made him run faster. It was likely that he would lengthen the distance in this case. If those two people arrived at the kingdom and informed them about the situation, it would be troublesome for Shin in various ways.

“Let’s get serious. It’s too bothersome to be marked by the guild any further.”

“What you said just now, can you explain it later?”

“That is that and this is this.”

Would it be possible to put it off after Schnee made such a face, Shin couldn’t say.

“Yosh, let’s go!”

He put Yuzuha on top of his head, and began to run with Schnee.

It didn’t take too long for the two people to catch up with Wilhelm and Rashia.

After about half a day since Shin and Schnee began to run and not much time had passed since the sun appeared from beyond the horizon, the figures of Wilhelm and Rashia were perceived.

–

“Oi! Now tell me everything, like what on earth happened back there?”

“What’s up with this sudden contentious attitude…”

Wilhelm was cautious of the surroundings while protecting Rashia, who was asleep. Though they joined up safely, Wilhelm was losing his temper and flared up at Shin with a threatening tone.

Meanwhile Rashia continued to sleep, probably because of fatigue.

“Well, to put it simply, Schnee took the trouble of defeating the Lord.”

“Hyun!”

Shin, who answered, was pushed away by the devil spear. It was not serious, but there was some speed put into the devil spear.

“Wait! That’s dangerous!!”

“I’ve never seen anyone that could do anything like that and have their magical power leap to that degree. You are dangerous after all!”

“Why are you so persistent!?”

“What else do you expect!! What was your intention when you saw us off with such an exaggerated skill, and then easily caught up with us! Even with such a margin in time! And I was fucking desperate to return!!”

“Wait, wait, calm down! Though it was a bad joke, isn’t『Venom』too much!?”

The devil spear was continuously thrust out, but it didn’t hit Shin even once.

“Tsk”

“What the heck are you clicking your tongue for!? It was just a little joke.”

“What joke? That face seems like it wants to say something, but you yourself didn’t do anything. Explain it precisely and I don’t want another joke.”

As one would expect, the joke seemed to have gone a little too far.

Wilhelm looked at Shin with a serious expression.

“Shin, let’s cut to the chase now.”

Schnee, who looked at Shin and Wilhelm messing around, stepped forward.

“You are..? Don’t tell me, you stood behind him.”

Wilhelm said it with some kind of profound meaning.

“It’s been a long time since I last saw you. If you understand, then the explanation is unnecessary?”

Apparently, the two people communicated with only those words.

“Hey, I want you to tell me in a way that I understand.”

Shin had no idea at all of what they were talking about.

“You don’t know, huh? Schnee Raizar is famous for not yielding or kneeling to anyone. I guess even to the Royal family and the Pope.”

It was somehow very stout-hearted.

“Isn’t that disrespectful?”

“I kneel to no one except to my Master.”

Somehow, Shin felt bad about her making the royal family an opponent, but it seemed like Schnee would never waver.

“Well, to begin with, there is no fellow who would dare pick a fight with her.”

“So that is the reason it was tolerated, huh?”

Let alone punishing her, there were only a few people who could even rival her.

When Shin heard that, it seemed as if that was not the only reason. Her tone and attitude were both polite. If a strong monster appeared, she lent her power. She kept neutrality without belonging to any organization, and didn’t bother picking any unnecessary fights.

The achievements from over 500 years were not just for show.

Though there were people who had secretly tried to draw her into becoming their ally, because she had such a great power, it seemed like none had ever succeeded.

“I understand the feeling of wanting to win her over to be an ally.”

“Wait…then if she is obediently following a guy like you, that means…”

“Ah, so you figured it out, huh?…”

Shin didn’t know how well Schnee and Wilhelm were acquainted, but it seemed like Wilhelm had already seen through it.

“A High Human, huh?”

“He is also my Master.”

“Yeah, that’s more or less it.”

“That’s not just more or less. But if that’s the case, I understand. That level of magic power was no joke.”

“Sorry, but that was still me in ‘easy’ mode.”

“I see…the Master of Schnee Raizar, huh? Indeed, the story was more than I expected…Oi, then the animal that you, a High Human, put on your head is not just an ordinary fox?”

Wilhelm shifted his attention to Yuzuha while feeling relieved and shrugging his shoulders. Surprise and amazement began to mix into his tone of voice. There was no sense of fear here, probably because he got to know Shin without any preconceived notions.

“Kuu?”

“It might not be a Little Fox. Its level exceeded 400 after the fight a little while ago.”

“…Again, I’m not really surprised.”

Wilhelm sighed while glaring with scornful eyes. Even though he was surprised by the truth about Yuzuha, which had the appearance of a small animal as well as a level exceeding 400, he was way past being shocked, so he ended up feeling “Like hell such a thing could exist!”.

“So that is why you vaguely answered about being a chosen one earlier, huh?”

“Right. In my case, I was not strong since birth, though my power is higher than a chosen one. I thought such guys were rare in this world, don’t you agree? Therefore, I decided to go with being a chosen one.”

“I see. Then, if you two act together from now on, it’s only a matter of time before it comes to light.”

Wilhelm’s point was justifiable. Generally speaking, Schnee and Tsuki no Hokora were famous. So if Schnee appeared to be close to a man, certain groups of people would try to gather information.

“For that situation, there are magic skills that easily allow me to deceive others. I can earn some time if I make full use of illusion magic.”

“I don’t think the illusion magic you talk about is similar to the one I know. I would not be surprised if you transformed into a monster.”

“What kind of treatment is this…”

Shin could do nothing but smile wryly.

“If you are going to do that, then you will be a walking disaster. A guy like you could easily go out and erase a country if he felt like it in the same day. If I were the King, I would lose my mind.”

It was meaningless to try and act violently, so Wilhelm sat down as he added another point. He then urged Shin and Schnee, who were still standing and talking, to sit down while he mended Rashia's bed sheet.

Rashia was sleeping soundly as her breathing could be heard. According to Wilhelm, when the people were told that high ranking adventurers were around, they seemed to calm down at last. Regarding Shin, he seemed convinced that there was no need to use the illusion magic skill immediately to that extent.

"Which reminds me, are any documents relating to us, High Humans, still remaining?"

He had returned empty handed when he visited the library before, but how were player matters circulated? Shin only had the unclear information that he had heard from Tiera. If he thought about it now, he wasn't certain if it was unconsciously avoided. No one would bother with such a dark history, and they would pretend like it never even happened, naturally.

"There might be some left. Well, the things that I know of are; they have absurdly powerful-like strength and each had their own field of expertise in which they possessed an abnormal ability. They were treated like Gods in their particular field."

"There are various legends that have been passed down among other people, right?"

Schnee chimes in.

"Uhee, this is gonna be troublesome again. Because Rokuten certainly was a former production guild first, we felt like we wouldn't lose to others when it came to our individual fields of expertise."

"Ha? Since you were strong at the beginning, did you waste time on craftsmanship? Like Schnee here."

"Wilhelm, didn't I only cook to pass the time??"

There seemed to be some kind of different history between the two people.

Even though every member of Rokuten certainly had amazing stats, the main reason they first gathered together was to be production guild.

"It's different from that. Even if the levels are the same, humans are weaker than other races. In my case, I compensated with blacksmithing. It was really difficult to raise its level at the same time as combat skills."

"You just ran from place to place many times when you first started adventuring, right?"

Schnee grunted "uh-huh" and nodded. When Shin first played, he was very weak compared to the present.

"These kinds of things, I guess, are not normal."

"That's what 'High players' did."

Schnee casually said a word that only players would understand.

"It was called 'High Human' though."

"Hai pu…what?"

Wilhelm could not understand the net term.

“Anyway, I made weapons to raise my level in blacksmithing. I equipped them and defeated stronger opponents to raise my level. Then I made a stronger weapon with the material from the opponents I defeated. And again, defeated another stronger enemy. It was this loop.”

To begin with, the world of blacksmithing was not sweet enough to be able to make an advanced weapon as easily like Shin said. Though ‘blacksmith’ was an example of a production skill system that was somewhat easier to raise than the combat system skill, THE NEW GATE was not a lenient enough of a game to allow it to be maxed that easily.

For this reason, there were divisions for production and combat system guilds. The majority of players who worked on both sides stopped halfway and quit, although it’s also difficult to master just one of the two systems. No similar person accomplished this.

In the systems above, players with a combat job had to be able to make a lower class recovery item, like a class 10 Potion, and production job players had to be able to handle a battle. But it was still only at a ‘better than nothing’ standard.

“Amazing. I guess you are the real deal.”

“How rude.”

“It’s absurd no matter how much I think about it. I can’t even think about standing both jobs together.”

“If you think about it, it seems like it would favor the long-lived species such as elves and pixies. But they are not able to do it.”

If the Pixie and Elf species existed in reality, they would not be suited for being blacksmiths in the first place.

In other words, raising two jobs together and so on was an unbelievable act of sheer madness for the residents of this world. Shin was able to do it because it had only been a game. Using items every time to gain a proficiency bonus and learning skills from using secret books, there stood Shin today only because he had spent the time to strengthen himself.

And even that took a tremendous amount of time. It was impossible to do the same thing in the daily life of this world.

“I’m aware of it. The members of Rokuten are strong in various ways. It is quite normal that even I am not a match for them, except for in blacksmithing. Cain could build a castle in a day, Cook could make a dish from dragons, Kashmir raised a monster ranch before anyone knew it, Hecate produced Elixirs and Philosopher stones, and made a load of low grade potions by mood. Also, Red’s puppets were able to exchange blows with divine beasts.”

“Shin has produced several holy swords and cursed sword types. And if you don’t like an 《Ancient》 grade sword, he and Filma will melt it down to avoid complaints.”

Schnee expressed a wry smile as she remembered those days. It didn’t matter if it was a 《Legend》 grade or a 《Mythology》 grade, he would just do it over again if he was not satisfied.

By the way, Filma was Shin’s no. 2 support character. Incidentally, Shin, who recalled that time, was strangely discouraged.

“That sure is a damn dramatical way to improve oneself. I mean, your specialty is blacksmith, huh?”

“That’s right. Do you want me to restructure your 『Venom』 ?”

“Are you kidding me?!”

Kukuku. Shin, who now had a suspicious voice with a grinning face, forced Wilhelm to reply right away. He seemed to give off a bad feeling somehow or another.

“Please tell me if you’re not satisfied. If it’s Wilhelm, I will reinforce it for a bargain price.”

“Oi, Why are you making a face like a shady merchant?”

“Iyaa, how should I put it, it’s just my blacksmith’s blood getting excited?”

“…Oh, your profession is certainly a craftsman. That face looks like a dwarf’s boss in a hot-iron room, now that I think about it.”

In any world too, it seemed like people with similar occupations all resembled each other in speech and action. The face of some dwarf craftsmen when they saw 『Venom』 appeared in Wilhelm’s mind clearly.

They have the eyes of children that have just found their new toy as it glitters, much like the eyes of Shin just now.

“Even so, you need a blacksmith’s forge to showcase your skills, don’t you? Though you are different than the others, a weapon cannot be made using secrets or a lost secret arts thing, you know?”

“I’m not like some fake blacksmith!! I only intend to hold a hammer after such a long absence from Tsuki no Hokora.”

“I know you will be able to make something. From the story of a craftsman, whom I am indebted to, the longsword produced by Rokuten’s blacksmith was of 《Normal》 grade, but was on equal terms with a 《Legend》 grade sword.”

Of course, Wilhelm was not a child to believe such a story. In a sense, 《Normal》 grade and 《Legend》 grade have different performance standards that couldn’t be compared with each other.

“It is indeed…no, wait. Now that you mention it, there was a time when I tested how far I could strengthen a 《Normal》 grade weapon.”

“Oi…you are joking, aren’t you?”

When Wilhelm reflectively asked that question in return, Schnee also opened her mouth to talk.

“Wasn’t that the experiment you conducted that was suggested by both Red-sama and Hecate-sama?

“That’s right. If I’m not mistaken, only suitable and prepared iron can be enchanted. It’s the kind that could only be made by using the best facilities available at that time. I put it in the store by mistake, I wonder if the buyer was surprised and spread that information.”

“…What the heck is that!”

By the way, the buyer bought it as a present for a beginner who had just begun to play the game. And it was discovered by players passing by, as monsters that should not able to be defeated by a beginner were being killed in one hit. When watched from the side, the monsters gave off a feeling of being awfully weak. The buyer thought it was just a normal longsword and didn’t notice it because they didn’t check the stats on the weapon.

“I was astonished that an amazing thing could be made at that time. However, because the material was iron, the durability is inferior by all means. I made several of them, and started to test them, or should I say crossed swords. They broke after striking each other about 10-20 times.”

“I would think, it’s damn weird, when it was possible to exchange blows at that time.”

As if to say he couldn’t comprehend Shin’s common sense, Wilhelm held his head with one hand. The grade of the weapon should not be sweet enough that even a blacksmith’s skill could enhance it this way.

“Ah, I understand it well. You are definitely a High Human. The common sense here just continues to break down since a while ago.”

“Because it is my Master, the current common sense does not work.”

“Kuu~Kuu~”

“No, that’s not a compliment.”

To the proud looking Schnee and the agreeing Yuzuha, Wilhelm retorted while being astounded. He seemed to still be a little confused as he didn’t notice how Yuzuha had reacted, as if it understood the words.

Schnee seemed to be boasting, probably because it was about the legend of Shin.

“Nh…Ngh?”

When Wilhelm was about to sigh, Rashia who had been sleeping on the side woke up. They apparently had made too much noise. It was too loud for her to continue sleeping.

“Eh?…Shin, san?”

“Yo.”

“Ah! Hello…why are you here!?”

Rashia, who was still half asleep, recognized someone with a glance before raising her voice. She was certain that this man had remained with the flock of monsters to let them get away. Even Yuzuha, who was on top of his head, was still the same as before.

“I somehow made it here.”

“Eh…?”

Rashia looked like she wanted to say, “What is he saying?” as she faced toward Wilhelm.

Wilhelm caught the gaze and responded.

“Apparently, an ally happened to pass by.”

Wilhelm said that while glancing at Shin and Schnee, as if his eyes said to Shin “Don’t you dare tell this girl.”

Because Shin also intended to conceal the fact about him being a High Human from Rashia, he gave a small nod. Unlike Wilhelm who had some connection to Rashia, who was a commoner, she couldn’t guess the identity of Shin from Schnee’s attitude. Though there was no problem if it was known, it was still dangerous just to know that valuable information. A possible information leak may cause Rashia misfortune..

So Wilhelm decided to modify the story to one where just an ally happened to pass by.

Incidentally about Wilhelm, Schnee was the companion who had handed over the letter of introduction to him, so he didn't have to worry.

"Nice to meet you. My name is Schnee Raizar. I am the acting manager of Tsuki no Hokora."

"Thank you for the polite words. I am called Rashia Luzel…um, what did you say just now?"

Rashia asked Schnee again as if she had heard something impossible.

Of course she had heard it, she just couldn't believe it.

"Because it's Schnee Raizar. You know. It's that Schnee Raizar."

"…That?"

"Oh, it's you!"

Schnee raised her eyebrow a little.

"Though it sounds like the meaning is not very positive for some reason."

Even though her name meant a good thing in this world, it was still a mystery how it could also have a strange meaning when people kept saying it.

"Just make up your damn mind. Look! Rashia, come back to yourself!"

"E-Errr, I'm Rashia! It's an honor to meet zuu! ….uu"

"Yes, I hope to get along with you."

Schnee replied as if Rashia biting her tongue didn't happen.

"I was only able to defeat those monsters thanks to Schnee helping out. You don't have to worry about anything."

"Did you defeat all of the monsters!? A-As expected from the 『Saint』-sama."

"Saint?"

Shin was trying to emphasize the achievements of Schnee, but had a question about the unfamiliar word.

"Ah, I'm sorry. Schnee-sama never accepted it."

"Didn't accept it?"

Shin looked at Schnee unintentionally.

"I received a communication acknowledging me as a Saint from the church headquarters previously. Although I declined it."

"Was there any problem in accepting it?"

“Yes. I don’t have any intention to be affiliated with influence somewhere just because I served with the High Humans. However, when the title of Saint arrived, because there is the possibility that I would naturally end up with some church influence, I didn’t accept it. I thought it was already forgotten about because it has been more than 100 years, but it seems they still haven’t given up yet.”

It was indeed unexpected, Schnee sighed as she was disgruntled.

Although the church recognized her as a Saint, it was meaningless if she didn’t accept it.

For Shin to meddle in the church’s internal politics would be more than a petty complication, it was completely contrary to his goal. Religion was something which was troublesome through all the ages. When thinking about these kinds of things, Schnee smiled at Rashia.

“You can call me Schnee, it’s no problem.”

“S-Such a thing! It’s too much.”

“You’re too tense!”

“Will, that is too much, too!”

Though it was somewhat exaggerated, Shin thought it was the correct reaction.

Shin, personally, was Schnee’s long-time acquaintance, and Wilhelm had a character that didn’t hold much back. Therefore they could talk normally. However, as Tiera said before, even children knew the name Schnee; she was very popular.

If that person was in front of someone normal, they would probably react this way, too.

“Oi, come on! Don’t we have to go soon? There’s no need to rest here, right?.”

Shin and Schnee hadn’t taken much of a break, and Wilhelm understood that much.

“That’s right, we should go then.”

Shin spoke while standing up with Schnee. They were able to leave without any problems, and since there were orphanage matters too, it was better to rush.

Rashia began to tidy up the bedding in a hurry as well. Though Rashia didn’t understand the significance of the details of the incident, for the time being she understood the explanation about how it was solved by Schnee. It didn’t mean that she had forgotten the fear of when they were surrounded by monsters, but Rashia might believe that there was nothing impossible for this person.

According to a commoner such as Rashia, Schnee Raizar was a living legend. A heroine and a saint, who had been protecting this land for more than 500 years.

There was a trust that was close to faith.

“Well, the reliance is greater than I thought.”

Shin talked to himself, as he saw the expression full of trust in Schnee on Rashia’s face. It was easy to imagine that it would become outrageous if Schnee walked together with him. It might be difficult even if it was only to buy something.

He sighed and decided to carefully make the disguise.

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Wilhelm carried Rashia, as Shin and Schnee maintained their speed to match up with them. No matter how much her level had risen, it would be a significant burden on Rashia if she had to run with all her effort.

That speed couldn't be compared with a horse. Even though they took a break on the way, the four people arrived at the location where they were able to see the kingdom's town before sunset.

They walked from there because it would be difficult if they caused others to be cautious of them as they were going to a place with public eyes.

"Ugh, I feel like vomiting…"

"Come on, I carried you on my back, so endure it."

Rashia, who was not used to high speed travel while being carried by someone, had her complexion worsen, like she was having motion sickness. Since it was cruel to let her walk as it was, Wilhelm carried her on his back.

"Are you alright?"

Schnee called out kindly.

"Don't worry, I will put up with it…"

"That's serious."

Shin let out a small sigh.

Because potions didn't work on motion sickness, the party proceeded after she said so.

Schnee had already changed her appearance using a magic skill before being perceived by the public. Her blue eyes turned red, her silver hair changed to blonde, and she now had a ponytail hairstyle. Several other skills were applied besides that.

Since Shin personally applied the magic, it would never be discovered unless in an extreme circumstance. From the beginning, just transforming a woman's hairstyle and her impression made her significantly different. If her hair color and eyes were changed, even humans who were used to seeing Schnee would not notice it immediately.

"Just to confirm, it's okay if we separate in front of the gate?"

"I don't mind. The request was originally until she learned the skill. There's no need to bother walking us to the church, too. If something does happen at the church, it's for us to manage."

"That tone that doesn't match with your honest side is the same as always."

Schnee showed a wry smile while speaking to Wilhelm.

"Dammit, leave me alone!"

They joked around while approaching the gate. Even though Wilhelm said that something might have already happened, Shin expanded his perception range to the orphanage, and confirmed everyone was safe. Of course, there were no signs of any uninvited guests either.

“Then, we will walk together up until we get there. I will give you this just in case. Please contact me if anything happens.”

When they arrived at the gate, Shin presented the message card and the letter paper.

However, Wilhelm who saw that, tried to refuse.

“This is the item that transfers a message, huh? If it turns into a situation where I need to use this, I won’t choose to do so. What if I involve you and something happens?”

“Moreover, it only puts you at a disadvantage.” those were the words left unsaid, but expressed through Wilhelm’s eyes as he told Shin, and his intention to have Shin stay out of it could be sensed.

No matter how similar Shin was to a chosen one, or as a similar fellow who was recognized by Tsuki no Hokora, Wilhelm didn’t intend to involve a companion who had merely received the request. There were possibilities of Shin being marked by the church when he received enough requests. If the message card was handed over and used, that alone was unjustifiable. He had already expected that Wilhelm would say that.

If something were to happen without Shin being involved, like the situation earlier, there was the high possibility that it couldn’t be solved, or it would become more disastrous. Even still, that man couldn’t approve of it.

Rashia, who was being carried on Wilhelm’s back, didn’t say anything either.

They themselves were going to challenge the enemy; who had power, money, and ability.

Schnee Raizar and her master. It should not be shameful in any way if they requested help from a companion with unparalleled power and fame in this world. But in this case, they kept their problems to themselves till the very end.

Though the request for 【Purification】 was just recently put out, it was already over, too. If possible, Wilhelm would settle it by himself from here-on. That belief became a wall that stood between Shin and Wilhelm.

“It’s fine. Take it.”

Shin forced the message card onto Wilhelm. He was saying to ignore the invisible wall between them.

“I will feel bad if I neglect you both from here on.”

“But――”

“Besides!”

Wilhelm tried to say something, but was interrupted by Shin.

“When I first came here, those children only tried to protect each other and their friends. I will not abandon them. Thus, when the chips are down, I will help.”

“You…what are you saying…”

“You can contact me without worrying about a thing. Take it quickly! It’s becoming a little embarrassing to say anymore!!”

He felt embarrassed about the lines which he had never uttered before, even in the real world. It was guaranteed that he would groan in agony once he thought about it later. Am I such a passionate guy? No doubt he would question himself.

But remorse would not do either.

Even if this world was a different world for him, there was nothing wrong with his choice. Believing so, Shin handed over the items.

“Then, I shouldn’t hold back?”

“Yeah, don’t worry about it.”

Wilhelm, who was broadly grinning, received the message card at last.

“Shin too, still the same as ever.”

“Is that so?”

Schnee said while seeing Wilhelm and Rashia off toward the gate. It was because there was a situation resembling such a thing before.

Though Shin showed a reaction of not remembering, Schnee clearly recalled the figure of Shin that had helped some strangers before, like just now.

They were a little girl whose eyes were swollen with tears, a young boy who was dumbstruck, and an old man who was going to sacrifice himself and desperately tried to go ahead of the young boy. There was no discrimination at all.

‘It’s impossible for me to save everyone, but there is no other way but to try to do it.’

When Shin talked like that.

Schnee was able to recall clearly, even now, the figure that was almighty, but didn’t act like it, and continued to protect the weak.

“What’s the matter, Schnee? Let’s move on.”

“I’m sorry, I was lost in my thoughts for a moment. I’m coming now.”

Schnee walked while looking at Shin’s back. After advancing for a while, they almost came to their destination.

Shin tilted his head when he looked at Schnee with side glances, but without pointing it out, the two people moved one step closer to Tsuki no Hokora.

Schnee’s face, when captured in Shin’s line of sight, had a very calm and gentle facial expression.

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After they had walked for a while, a familiar sight appeared in front of Shin and Schnee. Needless to say, it was Tsuki no Hokora.

Because the wooden sign at the door said 『The storekeeper has left home』, it seemed like the store was already closed. Naturally it was locked, but Shin was the owner, and Schnee was registered as an employee. So the lock automatically opened when Shin put his hand on the door, and the door swung open.

The store hadn't changed much from the last time that Shin visited, and there was a faint scent of dinner in the air.

"It can't be helped, my stomach is grumbling."

"I'm hungry~"

Shin held his belly, and Yuzuha, who had been silent for a long time, also raised its voice. Whether it could read the mood or not, it appeared to be bored because it had hardly barked while they had traveled with Wilhelm and Rashia. Now it was being carried by Shin.

"It's just the right time, let's have dinner first."

They both nodded at Schnee's proposal as she canceled her disguise, and then the sound of a person running loudly, probably from the main room to the counter's interior, was heard.

"Master!!"

It was Tiera, who was tending the store. She had probably heard the sound of the bell chime when they entered the store.

She appeared to be out of breath while holding a kitchen knife. She might have been in the middle of cooking as not even a little sense of danger came from her.

“Calm down. You are too flustered.”

“S-Sorry. But, as I wrote in the message card, a person came and told me he was master’s acquaintance, and then he left some amazing things behind!!”

Though the person in question was right in front of her, it seemed like she hadn’t noticed yet, probably because of her panicked state.

“Is this person the one?”

“AHH! T-That’s certainly right, but…Eh? Why are Shin and master together?”

Tiera became aware of Shin’s existence only after Schnee stepped sideways. But now the question of why the two people were together came out from her mouth.

It was because Tiera thought that her master should still be in the Wraith Plains and had no clue as to why the two of them were together. Aside from Schnee, Shin should still be in the plains when one thought about it with this world’s common sense.

“Just some various things have happened. Can we have dinner before we move on to the detailed story?”

“Because we had a bit of a complicated situation yesterday, it might take a long time to explain.”

Sigh “I understand…then Shin too, is gonna eat with us?”

Tiera, who didn’t know the circumstances, responded to Shin who talked like it was only natural.

“Of course he will.”

“Eh? Of course…what?”

“…Come to think of it, no one has told you yet, right Tiera? This person here is the ‘Manager’ of Tsuki no Hokora, Shin.”

Schnee smoothly dropped a bomb there.

“The man..a..ger?…Ah, the manager…THE MANAGEERRR!?”

It took a while for the word, “manager” to register in Tiera’s brain.

Tiera’s reaction when she finally understood what Schnee meant was as followed; she opened her eyes wide, her mouth formed an ‘O’ shape, and she almost dropped the kitchen knife she was holding. She was indeed easy to read.

“Isn’t she is a bit too surprised?”

“Because the common knowledge among the general public is that you don’t exist anymore, it’s no wonder that she is so surprised.”

“Who wouldn’t be surprised!? The manager, the… legendary manager!?”

“Eh? What? Am I known as the legendary manager?”

“That’s not it!! I mean a High Human!!”

“But, didn’t I tell you that when we first met?”

“Normally no one would believe it…”

The scene of Tiera losing her composure alone was amusing, but Shin was beginning to think that this might be the normal response. Like Tiera said, normally if someone said “I am High Human” or something like that, no one would take them seriously. But the best witness, Schnee Raizar, was here. Because she wouldn’t mistake the person she had actually served, it could be said that her testimony about Shin being the real deal, a High Human, was the definite proof. In the meantime, Tiera’s face turned pale.

“I’m terribly sorry, I didn’t realize you were the manager!!”

“Yes?”

“Kuu!”

She was completely transformed from the shock. Tiera bowed vigorously.

This time, it was Shin’s turn to be surprised.

What was she thinking of, because Yuzuha put its paw on the lowered head of Tiera, and Shin also stopped her immediately.

(This is…that, huh? That feeling when the other party casually spoke to their superior. Even though I experienced that shock, I still got flustered.)

The partner with whom Shin got along with, at his old part-time job, was in fact the shop manager, so he could understand a bit of Tiera’s feelings. Though it wasn’t a straight comparison, the partner who unbeknownst talked overly familiarly with their superior, often fretted and felt embarrassed when they found out.

Seeing Tiera in a flustered state made Shin unconsciously feel some pity.

“Don’t worry about it. I understand your feelings.”

“Eh? Oh, yes.”

While nodding, he put his hand on Tiera’s shoulder.

Of course, Tiera didn’t know that Shin’s thoughts expressed understanding, and his action caused her to become even more confused.

“No, really, don’t mind it. It’s weird and embarrassing for me too, if you obey respectfully at this point.”

“R-Really? You won’t say something like, ‘Get out of here’?”

“I won’t say it!?”

What kind of unreasonable action was that!? He wanted to retort.

After that, they talked for a little while, and it concluded in the same manner as before. Aside from Shin being Schnee's master, because there was more trouble when Yuzuha was introduced and could talk, Tiera had a similar reaction as before, so the rest of the story was omitted.

"Then, shall we eat?"

After a short period of discussion, all three people and one animal sat down together at the dining table. Needless to say, they had taken a bath prior to eating because they were covered with dirt.

They appeared to be in unity as they clapped their hands while saying "itadakimasu". Elves didn't seem to have such a custom, but because Schnee did it, Tiera too, did the same.

And Schnee was certainly imitating Shin.

"But, as expected from Schnee. All of them look delicious."

It was only natural that Shin praised her. The dishes that were arranged on the table were something that was not very often seen, even by Shin.

Even if pinnacle of chefs, Cook, was in Rokuten, they didn't eat homemade dishes every day. Moreover, the skill level Ⅹ of ultra high-class cooking was not meant to be eaten at every meal. It was sometimes made only by experimenting, and there was the possibility of serving a terrible failure of a dish, too.

However, the dishes in front of Shin were not that inferior when compared to Cook's high class dishes. As she compensated her skill with special flavors that were from this world, the dishes rivaled the best menus in a row.

In front of that type of meal, that even the royal family might not be able to eat, it was no wonder that the sounds of gulping in his throat resounded.

"Kuu~ A feast, a feast!"

"I have never seen Master cooking like this until now…Master is serious."

"Of course I am."

Yuzuha, who saw the dishes lined up, was also in high spirits.

Tiera, who lived together with her for a long time, was also astonished at Schnee's enthusiastic attitude.

"When it comes to a great dish like this, it's worthwhile to supply the ingredients."

"Amazing~"

"Hey, though I heard a little, just what on earth did you supply? There is a weird aura coming out of the dish."

"Ehh?"

"Kuu?"

When Tiera said that an aura came from the dish, Shin stiffened. Yuzuha tilted its head.

Even though nothing was displayed in Shin's eyes, he recalled the ingredients which he handed to Schnee. And it was not strange that Tiera, an elf, said that the dishes radiated an aura.

“Th-That right. The main meats are Thermal Leo, Orc King, and parts of Elmora. The vegetables are Blood Radish, Karma Onion, and Baocha Potato or something like that. The fruits are the Topaz Pear and Fruit of Idea. The others are somewhat proper. I guess you used the ingredients you had stocked up after that?”

“Indeed. I have used a few high-class ingredients because today is special. Though I didn’t have enough time to do anything special.”

Schnee’s words seemed like she was indirectly saying “I’m not serious yet”.

And speaking of Tiera, who just heard the name of the ingredients.

“W.. WH.. WHAT’S THAT!? Almost all of the ingredients are extremely hard to obtain!! I’ve never even heard of some of them before until now. Moreover, when you say Fruit of Idea, it’s the fruit of dreams that only bears fruit once every 100 years. Though I was told that the real deal didn’t even exist anywhere…”

She was at her wit’s end after hearing the names of the ingredients which left Shin’s mouth.

Thermal Leo and Orc King, were both acknowledged as monsters of calamity. As soon as they were discovered, there was such a degree of danger, that the guild conveyed an urgent summons for all of the adventurers. Even though Tiera hadn’t heard of the name Elmora, because it was treated on the same rank as the previous 2, she could imagine that it might be a similar one.

Blood Radish was a vegetable similar to a half monster that grew by sucking out demon essence from the air, and Baocha Potato was a tuber vegetable that exploded from a certain amount of pressure, just like a landmine.

As for the Topaz Pear, its surface glistened like a jewel, and about the Fruit of Ideas, there was no need to say anymore.

Once they were put together, one did not expect them to be used for cooking.

“Hey, Schnee. What aura does Tiera refer to?”

“It’s similar to the remains of the life force and magic power from the ingredients. Because we elves and pixies have senses unlike other races, such things can be perceived. It can be sensed more easily from a strong monster or a rare plant and so on.”

“Is that so?”

Since elves and pixies were originally a race that had a high sensitivity, he was able to understand what she said.

“Tiera too, calm down. Let’s eat soon or the special dishes will get cold.”

Schnee urged.

“Y-Yes.”

“That’s right. Then, let’s eat at once.”

Shin agreed as he nodded.

““Itadakimasu””

“Kuu? Itadakima~”

After clapping their hands for prayer, Shin took the knife and fork.

Soup, potato salad, hamburger, and his favorite rice and bread were lined up on the table. For the celebrated occasion Schnee's treasured drink, 『Moonlight Sake』, was poured into their glasses.

If one looked only at the menu, excluding the drink, they were similar to dishes served in a family restaurant. But he could recognize the skill of the cook directly due to it being a dish he was used to eating.

The meat juices that overflowed when he cut into it with the knife and the aroma of the sauce that was singed on the iron plate caused him to salivate before he even tasted it.

As he put it into his mouth, the meat juices overflowed even more as he chewed, and combined with the texture of the tender meat, only the single word 'delicious' could come out.

Then his mouth was filled with white rice, and there was no need to say anymore.

The corner of his mouth raised as he started grinning. A smile escaped him.

When one ate a really delicious dish, that person couldn't help but smile.

When he tilted his glass, the rich scent and deep flavor of the 『Moonlight Sake』 increased his appetite even more.

"…!…!…"

"……"

Shin and Tiera silently savored the food. As for Yuzuha, the word 'undivided attention' was embodied in its whole body.

While observing two people and one animal smiling, Schnee ate the meal fully at ease.

"Ha!! I unintentionally ate in silence!?"

Shin was stunned while sitting in front of his empty plate.

"Can I have another serving?"

"Sure!!"

Such interactions between Tiera and Yuzuha were repeated several times. As if she foresaw that, Schnee prepared it without missing a beat.

Even if the pace slowed down in the middle, they became a happy circle sitting together while listening to how Schnee and the others had spent their time until now.

"——Even so, those guys live quite freely."

Those words leaked from Shin's mouth as he heard about the other support characters. There was a fellow who became a King, one who wandered from place to place, and one who was missing in action. They seemed to be stubbornly searching for a clue on Shin's whereabouts. Though they might have stayed in this world, because they didn't imitate him by wasting their lives for that reason, he felt a little relieved.

He understood once he thought about their personalities. Up till here, only the devoted Schnee was special.

“‘Shin is somewhere’ was the only wishful thought I had to the end. Everyone might understand that it was not good to needlessly worry.”

“That will save me trouble. I didn’t want to keep you all looking for an imaginary guy who does not even exist.”

“Even if one of us chooses to do so, it is our own choice. Shin doesn’t have to worry about it.”

“You are right.”

Wouldn’t worrying when a person has gone missing make us human? Thinking about such things would indeed be a useless action. Well, even if said ‘people’ didn’t worry, because Shin was the master, it was just idle thought and meaningless speculation.

“Master, sad?”

“I’m okay, I’m okay.”

Shin returned a smile to Yuzuha who was looking at him with concern.

“Geezz~ Why ish Schhinn woarryingg soo muchhs~”

“…Hey, Tiera. I think you’re drunk.”

Her tone was slow and some enunciation didn’t come out well. Her remarkably white skin stood out in stark contrast with her black hair, which was now dyed in a slightly pink color. It was considerably reddened when he thought about her original snow-white skin.

Thus, that reminded him of how many sake bottles had been emptied so far. He got carried away as he had also drank a large amount up til now.

“Hey Schnee. How many 『Moonlight Sake』 were emptied?”

“Approximately 5 of them.”

“Incidentally, what is the alcohol percentage?”

“It is around 35 percent.”

“That’s HIGH!!”

Because he thought it was just a type of wine from the taste and easiness of drinkability, the alcohol from this fantasy world’s common sense was more than expected.

“Tere arre twuoo Masterrs~”

“This is really dangerous. Is Tiera weak to alcohol?”

“She’s never got drunk like this when she drank before, but quantity is quantity.”

“But I don’t feel very drunk.”

Whether it was about alcohol tolerance or not, Shin felt a little tipsy, but not more than a certain degree of loss of awareness. He wasn’t slurring and didn’t stagger around either. When he thought about the alcohol percentage, he himself would certainly be down for the night if this was in the real world, and it was a good

thing that it became difficult to expose shameful behavior with alcohol. There was no need to be troubled by some strong alcohol, even though he normally should be.

“Though I’ve had this body for one year, what’s happened to my real body… Well, now might not be the time to think about it.”

While Schnee took Tiera to her room, Shin tidied up the tableware. Shin suddenly thought of these kind of things while wiping the table. He didn’t know whether it was possible to return either, so it was no use even if he thought about it.

After the tidying-up was finished, Schnee returned.

“That was quick.”

“Because I’m used to doing this.”

Since he lived alone in the real world, he had to do the dishes on his own. Certainly he didn’t do it during the game, but he remembered how to unexpectedly.

“Yuzuha is sleepy…”

Yuzuha was falling into a doze on top of the desk.

“That’s right. We too, should go to sleep soon.”

“Let’s do so. Since Shin’s room was left as it is, it can be used immediately.”

“I appreciate it.”

After leaving the living room, Shin headed toward his own room while carrying Yuzuha. It was the room for Shin and the other support characters in Tsuki no Hokora, though there was also an extra room for more guests and customers to use. Even though a guest or customer room and the like was not needed, it was the result of the obsession from Cain and Shin; which could be said to have made useless additions in that construct, the Tsuki no Hokora. The place was thoroughly discussed about and they fussed over such pointless things; as it was the expected outcome when Japanese people get excited.

“It really hasn’t changed.”

He entered his own room and looked around inside. The inside area of the room was approximately 16 tatami mats big, with a bed and a desk. There were multiple shelves where trophies and items obtained from various events were displayed. Not many things were there. It was a plain room. The room might have been cleaned regularly, as the dust hadn’t accumulated.

Moonlight entered naturally from the window, but the light that night was terribly weak. He proceed to change his clothes without turning on the light, because he had the skill 【Night Vision】. Because there were no such things like pajamas in this world, he chose equipment with a jersey-like material.

Yuzuha had jumped onto the bed the moment they entered the room and it was already curled up next to the pillows.

“Somehow here is the best place to let myself relax.”

Was it because he had lived here since the game time? He could relax his mind and didn’t have to set up barriers because it was fully equipped with a very powerful security system. He didn’t have to consider the

possibility of a guy attacking him while he was sleeping, quite unlike the time during the death game; so he was able to genuinely relax for the first time since he came into this world again.

Of course, when there was an assailant, he would deal a serious blow, for it was deserved.

“Yuzuha…did you fall asleep? This won’t do, I should sleep too.”

As the alcohol set in, he lay down on the bed with a good feeling enveloping him.

When he closed his eyes and gradually felt his consciousness getting blurry, something soft suddenly clung around his right arm. Normally, he would jump up to his feet and shake it off in that situation. However, Shin’s body’s awareness told him that he didn’t feel any danger at all.

“?”

Was it embracing him rather than twining around? There were only two people in the Tsuki no Hokora who could do such a thing, and one person was already down for the count.

There was no reaction from the continuous activated skill for an anti surprise attack. Shin’s own intuition didn’t signal it as an enemy either.

Because it somehow had no particular movement, he turned his neck and looked at his right arm.

Beside him lay the figure of Schnee, who was already asleep, clinging to Shin’s arm. His right arm was wedged in between Schnee’s breasts. The identity of the softness he first felt was this.

(Seriously…is such a development even possible?)

With a different meaning from the time in front of the dishes, a gulping sound resounded in the room.

Even Shin was a man. He didn’t know about NPCs, but the Schnee in this world was undoubtedly the real deal. As a matter of course, there was no way he didn’t feel anything.

And frankly speaking, Schnee was created by combining Shin’s preferences. If he had picked her up, taken her into the room, and laid her on the bed, then he could lie down next to her with a gentleman’s behaviour. However, Schnee’s body-temperature was transmitted to his right arm, which was currently embraced closely, and the softness of her breasts put a hold on his reasoning power. His left hand stretched toward Schnee unconsciously, even though he was aware of it.

(This is…bad.)

He didn’t mean to do it, but due to the influence of the alcohol, by any means, he couldn’t take his eyes off of the defenseless sleeping face.

He understood it. Yes, he understood this was not good.

He desperately tried to cool down his head that was overheating, but his reasoning didn’t act like he expected.

He was entranced by her.

Her extremely defenseless face, innocent, and seemingly sad somewhere.

It was just by a little, but he wanted to leave his arm there a bit longer before excusing himself from Schnee.

It was at that moment. When the moon that was obscured by the clouds finally appeared.

The moonlight that was obstructed until now shone inside the room gracefully. It reached the edge of the bed, the place where Schnee just lay down.

"…!?"

When illuminated by the moonlight, Schnee's body faintly shone. The silvery hair, which was spread on top of the bed, reflected the moonlight and emitted a mysterious shine. And then, a stream of bright sparkles from her closed eyes slammed into Shin's eyes.

"Schnee…"

The flowing sparkles were tears that she shed.

It was flowing from the closed eyes in a straight line and dampened Shin's clothes.

"……"

The moment he saw it, the haze that enveloped Shin's consciousness cleared up.

The excited heat of desperation was cooled and disappeared instantly.

It was because he had seen a sad sleeping face.

What did she think about that made her cry? Shin had no idea.

Were they happy tears caused by their reunion? Were they tears for the upcoming parting?

He wiped her tears, and gently patted her head.

"Ah…u…i…"[13]

Even though he wasn't able to understand it, was it "Master" the word that leaked faintly from her mouth? Moreover, she might not have gotten used to calling him "Shin" yet.

(I…)

Looking up at the night sky, while aware of Schnee who was sleeping on his right arm, Shin thought of the question.

Until his consciousness sank into the darkness, no answer emerged.

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(Extra content from LN; Warning: might or might not contain a spoiler, read at your own risk.)

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[13] She probably says "Aruji", which means 'master'

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Let’s rewind time to go back to just over half a day into the past.

It was around the time when Shin and Schnee were dashing at near full speed for the sake of meeting up with Wilhelm and Rashia.

Right now, the Wraith Plains have become an ordinary large plain. Every one of the knights and adventurers that had gathered to investigate realized that the battle had ended. The light from the magic power that had spread through the sky had already faded away, so the mages were illuminating the place. Even though they had the choice of waiting until dawn before starting their duty, it was decided that an urgent investigation was necessary for the current situation.

From the fact that Schnee Raizar, who should have participated in the battle, had left, it was thought that at least there was no danger left.

“What the heck is that?”

While the knights and adventurers were busy moving around, one woman muttered as she looked at the deep crater newly created in the plains. The name of the woman with hair like golden threads swaying in the wind was Rionne Strail Bayreuth. She was the second princess of Bayreuth Kingdom.

Several hours before that, there was an incident in the forest when the knights were fighting the Skull Faces. Suddenly a wailing like voice, like a shriek, was heard reverberating from far away in the night sky.

Simultaneously, a group of Skull Faces with strength that never seen before appeared. A fresh enemy sprang up from the ground, in front of Rionne’s eyes, an enemy whose strength could not be compared to that of the Skull Faces she had fought until then.

At first, she felt fear. It was not a fear of being killed. She understood the opponent’s strength, so instead she felt a strong fear as she could imagine the tragedy it could cause. ‘I must not let that get away from the plains’, was the only thought she had in her head.

After her subordinate released her restraint, she faced off against the Skull Face with her sword. From the weight of a single blow that transmitted through her hands, its agility could be mistaken for an advanced level knight. She herself was said to be superior even among other chosen ones, and it was abnormal to exchange blows with her on equal terms.

Still, because the Skull Face's equipment was the same as an ordinary Skull Faces', she was able to win due to the difference in their equipment. A few days ago, all of a sudden, a white greatsword pierced on her room's wall. The greatsword was bestowed with a light attribute, the weak point of all undeads, and it caused the Skull Faces to be weakened steadily. But unfortunately, they were too many in numbers. It couldn't be helped since the other knights had to fight on their own.

Thereupon, Rionne, while at the same time letting the messenger return to their country, launched herself at the Skull Faces. Even if it only attracted a small amount of the attention of the enemy, she could gain more time. It was for the sake of stopping the crowd of monsters from leaving this place. With only one subordinate accompanying her, she charged into the middle of the battlefield.

Then, a Skull Face ranked higher than before appeared in front of her. Possibly, it was a Queen or King class in front of her; as the one earlier was a Jack class Skull Face. It was supposed to be impossible to defeat, as encountering one would be hopeless. The calamity caused by a single King class that appeared once still remained strongly in people's memory. As such multiple enemies appeared and filled up the plains. It might become an unprecedented disaster.

They actually felt death surrounding them, as they sensed the *Shinigami's breath on their skin. They reprimanded their bodies that trembled, and when they grasped their swords again, a red cannonball came flying from the sky. As the sphere hit the Skull Faces, it caused their whole bodies to be riddled with holes. No matter if it was the shield, sword, armor, arms, legs, or even their cores. Its appearance was similar to the flame system magic skill 【Fire Ball】. But 【Fire Ball】 had no such destructive power and homing nature like that flame ball in front of them. To begin with, a flame arts that didn't explode was unusual and the light it emitted upon impact eliminated its target as if it scraped off only that part.

Even though they were wondering why it didn't hit them, they understood that they were being protected. As they felt gratitude to whoever released the fireballs, they prepared their swords again to fight the Skull Faces that surrounded them.

This time, blue lightning passed through in front of them. This was the specialty of the person who helped out numerous countries, the lightning system magic skill. It was the skill that crossed the line from the art, as it had superior power and boasted of being the strongest skill ever.

The person they expected, appeared at the same time that the lighting had disappeared. With silver fluttering hair, it was the acting manager of Tsuki no Hokora, Schnee Raizar. Her appearance seemed unchanged since the last time Rionne had seen her, with her calm voice, Rionne felt death becoming distant. As if the Shinigami was blown away by the blue lightning.

"I will take over from here on out. Please escape through the forest."

Her words were returned with unhesitating nods. The Skull Faces that were scattered like wood chips were visible to their eyes.

And then, as they defeated the Skull Faces that were found here and there in the forest, the surroundings suddenly became as bright as if it was daytime, and the Skull Faces became ashes instantly without them doing anything.

Thereafter, the Skull Faces they encountered had sluggish movements and were smashed into pieces by a single blow of their swords. Though the opponent was supposed to have equal skills to Rionne, they were weakened to the point that even the ordinary knights could defeat them. It seemed like it was caused by the

light that shone onto the plains. A gentle and graceful light. It became clear that the damage they had received was recovering.

They couldn't help but think: 'If it's Schnee-dono, such a thing is possible'. After a while, the wriggling Skull Faces dissolved and became demon essence all at once. From watching that, they could comprehend that the situation was resolved.

Now, Rionne was looking at the traces of the battle that might be left from Schnee. There were deep fissures remaining in the earth. The ground was deeply scooped out, something that continued for hundreds of mels, there was even a place where the earth was totally molten.

At the location where they apparently clashed, there were bizarre traces of high voltage burns and deep slashing attacks. How much power was released when they clashed? They couldn't even imagine anymore. The first princess, who was the elder sister, might be able to do something similar with magic, but it was impossible for her to do close combat if she plunged into a crowd of Skull Faces.

"This… is this the power of a person who was recognized by the High Humans?"

Once again, that power was recognized. Even though Rionne's battle capability alone was said to be equal to 100 people or more, she felt like a dull, ordinary knight when compared to Schnee.

"Although it's still dusk, can you see here a little?"

The one who started talking was the subordinate that went to survey the surroundings. The man wore red armor that wrapped around his big body and his name was Gadras Jarre. He was the leader of the knights in Bayreuth Kingdom, and was the commander of the strongest knight squadron, 【Red Wolf】, in the kingdom. The reason why he became a mere battle assistant and accompanied Rionne was to prevent her from going on a rampage, but he hardly ever accomplished his role, not even this time.

Gadras too, had to directly face against the Skull Faces. He was the only chosen one in the knights squadron who could handle a close range battle with Rionne, and although he usually had the role of a watchdog, this was the only time that he had to fight as hard as he could. There were numerous cuts on his armor as proof.

In Gadras's hand, a katana was held. Its handle was worn-out and darkened, the blade was cracked, and its edge was chipped here and there, too.

"This is?"

"This thing was found above the hollowed out ground over there. Because it was stuck in the place where the fissures ended, I collected it."

He also said that the katana that had been stuck there matched with the directional line of the hollowed out ground.

"Also, though it's just a hunch, I think the hollowed out ground was caused by this katana. However, I don't know what skill was used."

"Hmm, is there a possibility of that?"

Was Schnee together with another person on the battlefield? Rionne thought if it was at least Schnee, the case might be possible.

"That katana here, what do you see?"

Gadras pointed at the katana.

“…Something like a bird?”

“Right, from the story of a well-informed guy I know, that bird is a falcon, like in the story.”

“Is there something wrong with that?”

“Not really, I just have an idea of the blacksmith who carved it into the katana. Of course, it’s only one of the possibilities, but…”

“You have an idea? It doesn’t mean that there is only one blacksmith who drew the falcon, don’t you agree? Why are you making such a fuss?”

Rionne looked puzzled at Gadras who abruptly said those words. He appeared to be strangely restless.

“You will understand if you look at this.”

Gadras spoke as he held the tattered hilt and raised the katana to an overhead position. Then he swung downward, straight to the ground.

“…I see, so that’s the reason, huh?”

Rionne’s expression showed understanding.

The ground that was in front of her was deeply gouged out. No matter how much Gadras was said to be a chosen one, he couldn’t unleash this degree of slashing attack with a katana that had a chipped blade. In other words, despite Gadras swinging the katana in question down with all of his might, the katana remained fractured as it was, but maintained its shape.

“If it was a normal katana it would have broken apart when I smashed it, but it didn’t have any effect, even when I used all of my power. It is obvious that no ordinary blacksmith forged this.”

“Certainly…if it was in a perfect state, how much power would be released?”

“Also, speaking of the blacksmith who would make such a katana carved with this crest, there is only one person, as far as I know.”

“Fumu, who is it?”

Rionne replied as calmly as possible. Furthermore, Gadras’s voice was filled with excitement.

“A High Human. It was said that the blacksmith, who had mastered all the smithing techniques, was called the 【Dark Blacksmith】.”

“That may be true. I could understand if a person who was well versed in smithing forged this katana, especially if it was a High Human. But, he should not be in this world anymore. If it’s Schnee-dono, who was under the direct control of a High Human, it is not strange that she possesses such a weapon. Moreover, if you saw the skill that was protecting us and that light from before, there is the possibility of the 【Crimson Alchemist】, too.”

Of course, the alchemist whom Rionne spoke of was both the mage and alchemist of Rokuten, Hecate. Because Rokuten’s production aspect was famous, they were often called by a name that was related to their job. The color that was attached before the job’s name was the color of the clothes that each of them liked to wear.

“Well, there is no conclusive evidence, but…anyway, that a High Human made weapon is lying around is amazing. Besides, I don’t think that the weapon of Schnee-dono’s master would be in a state like this. If that’s the case, I think there might be an astounding person who can use it and throw away this kind of weapon somewhere.”

“But this time, the scale is different from the battle so far. Do you understand the light that illuminated the night? If it was such an intense battle, even Schnee-dono might not think about wasting a weapon…Still, it is true that there was someone else here besides Schnee-dono. Who on earth is that person?”

“What could have caused Schnee-dono to be placed in such a predicament, it’s unimaginable.”

As she listened to Gadras’s words, Rionne thought about it. Truthfully, since she had seen Schnee’s figure easily kicking aside the Skull Faces, Rionne wasn’t convinced by her own words either. It was due to the magic skill user who took the trouble to protect them in the beginning. Judging from the power and scale, it was probably not a High Human, but for certain it was not in the class of a chosen one either. After they went into the forest, did Schnee Raizar join to fight with that person? If it is true that there was a powerful person at this place, then who was it?

“No way, really?”

Was there a High Human in that place?

The katana which Gadras held, it might even be a higher grade than the weapon Rionne had, if it was in a perfect state. For a being to be able to use and dispose of such a weapon, she couldn’t fathom they existed.

“No, it’s impossible.”

Rionne shook her head in denial. High Humans should have disappeared like many other people did after the Dusk of the Majesty. Since the unusual event that was said to still be a mystery, until now, no one had ever returned. However, maybe. Just maybe.

There was, as far as the legend goes, a story that it was High Humans that crushed the people who were called heroes and brave men altogether. If the High Human has returned, it would be not strange.

“…I better stop, I will never understand it even if I think about it.”

She didn’t know who was in that battlefield, but if that person was related to Schnee, then that person could not be a dangerous character. Even though it would be necessary to spare a number of men to monitor Tsuki no Hokora to some extent, Rionne thought it would not be a serious problem.

“As soon as the investigation is over, I will go back to our country. I would like to talk to Schnee-dono if possible, but…”

“It will be difficult, right?”

From Gadras’ words, Rionne nodded as she understood too. Once her request was finished, Schnee Raizar wouldn’t stay too long. This was because the invitations came from many places and had grown out of control, so it might be complicated this time.

“Gadras. If I’m not mistaken, Dark Blacksmith was the owner of the Tsuki no Hokora, right?”

“Yes, that should be right, though…?”

“Fumu, then try to visit Tsuki no Hokora right away when you return.”

“Though that is what I want to say, is it because you think that a High Human has really returned?”

“I am certain that there was at least one other person on that battlefield. Well, in fact, someone should be confirming it. If one really has returned, I certainly would like to have a match. I assume that he would be perfect as a marriage partner.”

“A-Again without warning, what are you talking about, huh?”

Gadras became flustered by Rionne who had suggested an unexpected thing. When he thought about it calmly, if the High Human was won over to their side by the dedication of Rionne alone, it would be good for the country. Even Gadras understood that much.

The problem with this princess, Rionne, was that it was said that a portion of her brain might be made up of muscles. Though it was not the truth, “If you want to be my husband, you have to show your own power and defeat me.” was considered to be what she said up until now. All of the vassals including Kings, if he thought about it, how many times did she reject them…if they were uninteresting.

The princess’ situation was understandable, and there was the feeling of having to think about the nation, as well. In the future, he understood that she expected for her marriage to not be forced, either.

This time too, even if it became a situation where the Skull Faces began to overflow from the Wraith Plains, there was no question about her actions either. The princess was outside of their territory, and in addition to that, showed up on the battlefield.

Rionne and Gadras were chosen ones, therefore it was not a big problem for them. They cooperate in moments of peril at the same time without sparing any effort in attitude, which was displayed even in a strange land.

Under the pretext of that power and her beautiful face which raised the knights morale, she had participated in this investigation and exterminatory battle. Although the latter role has been taken away by Schnee, she has accomplished her given role well.

One point. If the one point of an oddball character was nonexistent, she would be perfect. Though it was not the whole head, there was the reason she was said to have a part of her brain muscle.

“Just to be clear when I say a test of strength; what if it turns out to be an impostor who stabs at my back without warning? If not, the day when a High Human turns into an enemy, our country will disappear.”

“You have a point there.”

“Heh, I don’t want to hear that from you. Well though, I wonder if a High Human could become a really good partner.”

Even though it was supposed to be wise, for some reason, the slightly abrupt answer from Rionne caused Gadras to be weary. Consequently, the excitement when he discovered the katana also had left him.

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Chapter 4

The next morning, after Shin had spent the night at Tsuki no Hokora.

“…It’s too bright.”

It was the first thing that he thought when he woke up.

The sunlight had reached the top of the bed because he didn’t close the curtains. Now, it was directly shining on Shin’s face.

“What time is it now?”

Because he had gone to bed without setting the alarm, he didn’t know the time. When the menu screen was displayed, it was slightly pass 6:30.

“Schnee is not here…”

Schnee, that had been clinging to his right hand, was nowhere to be seen. It was likely that she was already awake. A faint smell of breakfast confirmed Shin’s prediction.

As he had those thoughts, there was a feeling of some discomfort on his left arm. He turned toward that way while thinking ‘no way’, as silvery hair spread on the bed, entered his field of vision. If it was that alone, he would have thought it was Schnee, but the physique was too different for some reason.

The figure that was stark naked and sleeping peacefully, was a little girl of around 10 years old.

Her identity――

“Is this Yuzuha?”

【Analyze】showed the name of the little girl. Besides when Yuzuha mentioned about its head clearing up after the fight yesterday, perhaps there was some sort of seal that was removed as well. If that was the case, then the unusual level up, suddenly being able to speak, and having this figure too. All of it was explained.

Anyways, when an Element tail became a full-fledged level 1000, highest class monster in the game; human transformation and talking too, were possible by default. It just felt unnatural to see instead of the fox’s usual appearance.

Leaving behind the fox ears and tail for no special reason, it was an irresistible appearance for a person who likes these sort of things.

“In any event, this is a very dangerous setting.”

It was a common pattern, someone would come to wake another person up with bad timing and then, receive an outrageous shock due to the misunderstanding.

There was no presence of a person on the other side of the door, but he couldn’t be careless now.

“Hey Yuzuha, wake up. It’s morning.”

He held Yuzuha's shoulders and began to wake it up. While paying attention toward the outside the room, he shook it a little harder.

"Unyu…What~?"

"I will say it again, it's morning."

"I'm still sleepy…"

It seemed like its appearance still similar with the personality, too. The Element Tail in Shin's memory had an antique way of talking, but now, it talked like a little child.

"Come on, wake up, quickly."

"Nh? Oh.. Shin~ Good morning~"

"Yeah, good morning. Please put on clothes for the time being as you get up."

Though Yuzuha was only a little half-asleep, when it realized it was Shin that woke it up, it had an 'awkwardly forced smile' on its face. Depending on the person who saw the smile, they would roll over in agony. Of course, there was no such characteristic in Shin as he ignored it and urged Yuzuha to put on clothes.

"Shin is warm~"

"Why are you clinging. A girl must not do such a vulgar thing, it's bad."

"Eh~"

Shin warned Yuzuha while separating himself.

After all, everything would end if someone saw him embraced by a naked little girl.

While it looked like fondling a younger sister, he had to keep some distance.

"Is a girl no good?"

"Not good!"

"Then I will transform this way!"

Yuzuha, who asked that, emphasized girl for some reason. For Shin who was against it with, "Not good", Yuzuha took an unexpected action.

All of a sudden, Yuzuha's body emitted a faint light, and the slightly bulging chest disappeared, followed by that, the hair became very short. And then, in that nether region, there was a thing that a little girl shouldn't have.

Shin's thoughts stopped at that moment, the phenomenon that happened before his eyes was too shocking.

"…Oi…Why, did you become this?"

"If a girl is not good, then I should become a boy!!"

It was not a line that a nude pretty boy, while puffing out his chest with pride, should say. In front of Shin was not the coveted ‘loli’ of pretty girls, it was the desired ‘shota’ of pretty boys. There was no fixed distinction of sex to an Element Tail. This was the moment that made him realize it clearly.

“Even if it is a girl or a boy, it’s not good to embrace while naked.”

“Shin doesn’t like ‘boys’?”

“Why is it, that I feel like the way you said ‘boy’ has a different meaning to it.”

He felt the sense of incongruity from the remark. Yuzuha wasn’t supposed to know the meaning it held in order for it to say it.

“Yuzuha? I have one question for you; when you said a ‘boy’, you mean a ‘man’, right?”

“Kuu? Doesn’t it mean a cute boy? But, I wonder if this boy is a cool looking guy.”

“……”

Although it seemed alright for now, he felt a shudder.

“Shin?”

“Well…It is not wrong, I guess.”

And then, Shin properly glossed over the question.

“Or more precisely, where did you hear that?”

“People who came to the Shinto shrine said it. In addition, the ‘BL’ they said was interesting.”

“Who the ー!! What a fool to have a conversation like that in front of the boss Element Tailーー!!”

While sending a curse to whomever and wherever the unknown players were, Shin instructed Yuzuha to return to the little girl mode. It was not so bad when it was a ‘loli’, but a suspicious ‘shota’ was too hard mentally.

“Come on, put this on for the time being.”

“It’s puffy. What is it~?”

“It is from the material that I made before. If I remember correctly, didn’t you wear clothes that had such a feeling before?”

Shin handed Yuzuha a scarlet hakama with a kimono undershirt and a white robe. In short, it was the shrine maiden clothes. Certainly, they were not ordinary clothes since they came from Shin’s Item Box. Even though the clothes would be suitable in the Shinto shrine, they were also the clothes that Element Tail wore during the game in human mode.

“Oh~”

“Please say if you think you want to change the color. If i’m not mistaken, it was navy blue?”

“This is fine~!!”

Yuzuha delightedly said, while putting on the shrine maiden clothes. Because the size adjustability was included, there was no problem even if the figure was small.

However, was the memory vague? A few minutes after the clothes began to change, they had lost shape everywhere.

“Shin～…”

Yuzuha called to Shin in a frail voice.

“Say it from the beginning if you don’t know how.”

Shin spoke while he repaired Yuzuha’s disarrayed clothes. Speaking of how he knew how to put on the shrine maiden clothes, it was because of the schematic attached to the note column. Such a thing was a part of the item’s clothes description.

As Yuzuha put on the Japanese sock that Shin took out as an addition, it spun around and around on top of the bed in high spirits.

“Kuu~”

“Don’t move around too much. The outfit will get out of shape.”

“Then, I will have Shin dress me again~”

“Stop it.”

What made it so happy? It was twirling around and around, matching with the tail that extended from the hakama. Somehow the shrine maiden clothes expanded from the spine muscle as a result.

Was it the close feeling of wearing a dougi? Shin wondered. He had a hunch that the spine expanded only because it wore it like that.

“Hey, don’t go turning around. It should be breakfast soon.”

“Breakfast!”

“I guess Yuzuha feels hungry too.”

“Yes!”

“Then, let’s go. Hmm? Someone is coming. This response, is it Tiera?…Ha!?”

Shin perceived that it was Tiera approaching. It was different if it was Schnee, but he hadn’t explained about Yuzuha to Tiera in detail yet.

“Shin, are you awake? The breakfast will be ready soon.”

Tiera knocked on the door as she told him about breakfast.

“Oh, yes. I will be ready right away――”

Still, the door was not impudently opened like the way they did in mangas and light novels. But, was Yuzuha not able to wait? Yuzuha, who didn’t notice Tiera’s voice, pushed open the door with all of its might.

“Breakfast!!”

“——There!? Yuzuha stop!!”

“Eh?”

At the same time as Tiera’s surprised voice, a thick sound resounded as the door collided with Tiera.

“Ouch~”

“Um, ano, au…”

Shin, who appeared from the side of the door, saw Tiera holding her reddening nose and the figure of Yuzuha was also seen. It seemed like Tiera took a pratfall as she was sitting in a child-like sitting state.

“Are you alright”

“Uu~ This child is?”

“It’s Yuzuha. Actually, it has a transformation ability. Hey, apologize to Tiera.”

“I am so-sorry…”

“I see. Haha, it’s alright, Yuzuha-chan. Since I didn’t get hit with too much power. But, be careful when you open the door next time, okay? And um, good morning.”

“Okay~ Um, good morning.”

Tiera, who was seen laughing, made Yuzuha, who was panicked, feel relieved. As for Yuzuha now, one would think that it was only a child that was excited too much, because its thoughts and actions were appropriate for its age.

Shin thought about it while seeing the situation that got the two people talking. If he looked at Yuzuha’s situation, this might be the maximum growth limit in the present conditions. Yuzuha hasn’t leveled up since that time, and he knew that it’s mind state hadn’t completely returned to its original state either.

Why was Yuzuha’s power sealed? Though he didn’t understand much of the information obtained from Yuzuha itself, he would have to verify it. It was obvious to Shin that there was something else unknown that occurred.

“By the way, now that you two have reconciled, shouldn’t we go eat breakfast?”

“Yes, because I only can serve it after. Master is already there waiting.”

“Breakfast~, breakfast~”

“Huh, was it a young fox originally? Yuzuha-chan, do you like fried tofu?

“I love it!”

“Then, shall I make inarisushi[14] for lunch?”

“Really!?”

[14] sushi wrapped in fried tofu

Yuzuha rejoiced when it heard inarisushi. This appearance that wasn't even seen in intimate sisters.

"Good morning. Ara, is Yuzuha also able to change into a human form?"

When the three people arrived at the living room, Schnee who set the table greeted them. Since she knew that Yuzuha was an Element Tail, she didn't seem to be surprised much. And Shin decided not to touch on what happened last night.

"G-Good morning."

"Yes, good morning. Then, shall I lay out the meal for each person?"

Was it because of the sudden encounter with Tiera? Yuzuha showed a little restraint while greeting Schnee.

Seeing Schnee, who returned the greeting while smiling kindly, Yuzuha separated from Shin's trousers, which Yuzuha had kept holding while watching from there.

As for the table, even if four people sat, there was plenty of space left. While Schnee prepared breakfast for Yuzuha's portion, Shin brought a spare chair.

"Then, let's eat."

""Itadakimasu!""

They clasped their hands and began to eat. The menu was rice, fried tofu miso soup with seaweed and tofu, and dried and opened mackerel fish.

Shin thought about whether or not Japanese foods suited elves, but there was no feeling out of place because of the figure that was holding wooden chopsticks and breaking the fish into smaller pieces.

Yuzuha was using a spoon because it couldn't use chopsticks properly.

"Yummy!"

"As expected from Master."

"This is great."

Only voices of praise came out. Even though it was not luxurious, even in the real world he never ate such a delicious meal.

"That is because of the flavor boost from the skill. I can't be proud of it very much."

"Isn't it a great thing?"

"The taste goes up at least two stages due to the skill."

"Is that so, but it could not originally be delicious if there was no practice. After all, I still think it's amazing."

"That is so, didn't Master practice so much?"

Tiera talked about how the humble Schnee put great effort in cooking.

As for the cooking skill, it certainly could compensate the dish in various ways, but it was not possible to improve bad foods. Because a bad thing would always be a bad thing.

Even if one compensated with the skill, there was no change if the cooking ability was good.

“Thanks for the meal!”

“Yes, I’m glad that you’re satisfied.”

◆◆◆◆

After breakfast, Schnee and Tiera were in charge of cleaning up and Shin headed toward the blacksmith’s workshop in the inner part of Tsuki no Hokora. Yuzuha, who was probably curious about it, came along with Shin.

“What is in there?”

“It’s my warehouse and workshop, and the warehouse is a little special. It has considerable more capacity than it looks.”

The storehouse of Tsuki no Hokora was not as big as a guild house, but quite a lot of items were stored inside. Since it was Shin’s personal warehouse, its contents were inclined to be weapons and armor.

They were making a little detour in response to Yuzuha’s comment, “I want to see it”. The appearance of the warehouse was a normal door with a hanging lock. However, it was so tough that even Shin’s strongest attack in the game era couldn’t break it. It was said that nothing could break it physically.

“Just pour a little magic power, and done.”

When Shin poured magic power into the lock, a light “click” sound was made, and the lock came off. This type of lock was opened by using magic power recognition. The door wouldn’t open no matter how much someone fiddled with the fake keyhole.

He pushed open the door and they entered inside. There, it was overflowing with lines of armor and weapons side by side.

There were swords, katanas, spears, bows, daggers, large hammers, halberds, flails and all kinds of weapons displayed. In a different location, there were full body armors for warriors, gauntlets that were thought to be custom-made, and shields alongside it all. Naturally, everything was valuable, starting from 《Unique》 grade to 《Legend》 grade, 《Mythology》 grade and finally, 《Ancient》 grade.

A person would feel an enormous amount of pressure the moment they entered the room, even if the person was not sensitive to magic power. Although the quantity and the quality of each item was different, the overwhelming magic power given off was similar to the feeling of abnormal tepid water according to a dweller of this world.

If even one of them was put up for sale, many countries would have piles of their weapons lose their value when compared to its prestige. A warehouse that had a large quantity of these kinds of things for sale already felt like a ‘warehouse clearance sale’.

“Amazing! But, somehow I feel hot~”

“It is because this place is filled with magic power. You better not enter if you are not strong-minded.”

“Yuzuha is okay for this much!”

The Element Tail was indeed one of the strongest species even if it was young.

Rather than being overwhelmed by the magic power pressure emitted from the arms, Yuzuha was looking curiously around the warehouse. Even though its tail fur was fully bristled up, there are some things that are better left unsaid.

“It’s fine if you only look at it, but don’t touch without permission, okay? There are some cursed arms here.”

“Is it dangerous?”

“Ah, I just don’t want you to get hurt. There is a seal function attached to the containers, but there are several of them that you might able to break.”

“Muu, Yuzuha don’t do things like that.”

While apologizing to Yuzuha, who puffed its cheeks, they headed off to the blacksmith’s workshop. Even here, it was in a perfect state without change, waiting for its master to return.

“There’s no problem at all. It seems like I can use it right away.”

“To do what?”

“I’m making swords and armor here. But before doing it today, I have to ask you something, Yuzuha.”

“Want to ask me something?”

“There is a lot I want to ask. Well, lets return to the living room for now. After that, we will talk. As for forging a sword, that’s for later.”

“Then let’s go quickly. I want to see Shin forge a sword!”

They returned to the living room and Yuzuha had sparkling eyes with anticipation. Even though Shin didn’t know what Yuzuha was looking forward to so much, he lightly checked the tools and followed after Yuzuha. As for Schnee and Tiera, who were taking care of the cleaning after the breakfast, it should be done soon.

When he returned to the living room, the three of them already surrounded the table. He sat down on his seat while smiling wryly at Yuzuha, who urged him on with “quickly! quickly!”.

“What did Shin want to ask?”

“First of all, why were you in such a weakened state in that Shinto shrine. And, did a large amount of people disappear around 500 years ago? If you know something about it, then please tell me.”

When Shin’s question was heard, Yuzuha closed its eyes and folded its arms like it was thinking about something. After several seconds like that, Yuzuha began to talk.

“Well, err… When Yuzuha was there, I was having the most painful experience from the inside. It was very painful, so much that I collapsed.”[15]

“Is that so? Did you understand the drawing on that floor?”

“No~, I didn’t know it.”

[15] Yuzuha sometimes refer itself as “Yuzuha” when talking

Shin thought it was some sort of relief feature that delayed the condition, but Yuzuha didn't seem to remember it.

"I understand. How about the people who had disappeared?"

"I don't know. People didn't come very much."

"Now that I think about it, there was some kind of erected barrier that made people stay away from there."

Shin remembered that a barrier, around the Shinto shrine, affecting one's mind had been erected. A person might not come near it because of that.

"Eventually, what was Yuzuha doing in such place?"

"Uhm, I was basking under the sun, when suddenly the ground went 'bam', the wind blew 'byu byu' and the mountain went 'clang'. Yuzuha was surprised and jumped. After that, I tried my best so that the ground would not be wrecked apart."

"…In other words, the natural disaster occurred, and you tried to suppress it?"

"It is likely so, I have no doubt if it is Yuzuha."

"Eh, is that true?"

When Schnee chimed in with an agreeable response, Tiera was amazed and had wide eyes.

Though Shin didn't know what kind of technique Yuzuha used, the Element Tail was a monster that corresponded to all attributes. The possibilities of interfering with the natural disaster by some special method was high.

"A lot of power was used while I kept at it, then I took a rest in the Shinto shrine. Because my power could not be held in my body then, I thought I was gonna die soon when Shin came."

"It was just at the last minute when I came, huh?"

"When the unpleasant wind blew, I was scared."

When he heard about unpleasant wind, Shin was reminded of the miasma. Perhaps both of the 【Curse • X】 and the 【Poison • X】 at that time, were caused by the miasma. A number of monsters and levels were increased in an area with a lot of miasma during the game. Moreover, to a player, it was a troublesome way to be given an abnormality state responding to status at a regular intervals. Apart from the monsters, they had to drink potions regularly because of the abnormality state, although it didn't affect high-ranked players too much.

"It was thanks to Millie that Yuzuha was saved. I wouldn't have gone there if not for Millie's advice."

"I will give thanks when I meet Mi-chan again."

"That's right, let's take some souvenirs."

Because of the forecast ability, Shin couldn't say it clearly. Whether Yuzuha understood it or not, it matched with Shin's way of talking.

"Hey, who is Millie?"

Tiera looked puzzled.

“She’s a child who lives in the orphanage of the kingdom. I happened to meet her by chance. If you know Wilhelm, think of the orphanage he is protecting and you will understand.”

“Ah! that guy.”

“You know Wilhelm?”

“He comes over once a while to meet master. But I rarely meet him. However, I thought it was strange that he bought sweets while he was here on occasion. I wonder if he was going to the orphanage, if so, it is understandable.”

Wilhelm seemed to buy the cakes which Tiera made.

“It is because the cakes that Tiera makes are delicious, right?”

“No, it is because it’s cheap. Master’s cake are more delicious. Even the king’s messenger has come to purchase it. Because I learned mine in an elf’s village, it is only fine.”

They praised each other, although both of them seemed delicious.

“When you said learned it in an elf’s village, which one was it?”

“Uhm, it’s a baked confectionery called Cayfal, have you heard of it?”

“No, I have never heard of it.”

In the first place, he didn’t remember any kind of setting called skillful bakery in any elf’s village. Because cooking was not his specialty, there were many dishes which he couldn’t cook or make, even if he had the recipe.

“That Cayfal is like a financier[16], huh? It will be nice to distribute it to children because the cake is as big as a mouthful.”

“Though I displayed it on a whim, one or two sale items have to compete at the present time. Because I originally lived in the forest, my strong point is making cake using honey.”

“Is that so? But wait, since Tsuki no Hokora is not a store that mainly sells foodstuff, are there any other sales?”

Shin looked at Schnee while asking that.

“Because Shin was absent, there are a few items for sale. I am an amateur with smithery, and for replenishing the goods, only Shin can open the storehouse where the arms were kept.”

Therefore, Schnee had to replenish unskilled stock from somewhere, and it seemed difficult to replenish goods because of competition over that right. It was only natural that if the maker went missing, there would be a shortage of inventory.

“How should I say it…I’m sorry. Schnee is doing a good job to keep the store open.”

“Even if it is open, there aren’t many things that are able to be put up for sale.”

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[16] Financier is a small French cake

"…That's true. Even if it's open, it won't solve anything."

During the game era, the store was barely continuing in business. It was no wonder.

"When I have time, I will replenish the stock with the ones I have saved."

"Roger that. By the way, the talks have derailed from the subject. Yuzuha, can we continue?"

"Yup. But, because I was in the Shinto shrine the whole time, I don't know more than you already know."

The interference to the natural disaster, it seemed to be an impossible task, even to an Element Tail. Although it said that it didn't know about the world's situation, because it made a great effort to decrease the damage of the natural phenomenon since the Dusk of the Majesty, there's no reason to blame it.

"I see, tell me when you recall something, just in case."

"Yes, I understand~ Umm, Tiera-onee-chan, that Cayfal just now, is it done yet?"

When the conversation settled down, Yuzuha asked about the pastry matter to Tiera. Was it interested in it that much? Even the things about the smithy was forgotten. As Yuzuha approached Tiera, its tail shook with flutters.

Such an appearance also suited its age.

"Excuse me, but there is one more thing. I have to talk to Shin."

"…What?"

Though Schnee was in a serious mood; it was different from a while ago, as she put a stop to the air trying to clear.

She appeared to have been looking for the right time to begin the talk.

"Actually, there is a person I would like you to meet. I understand that you may have various things to investigate, but please make this the first priority this time."

"Then, who is this person you want me to meet?"

Shin felt like it was a rush from Schnee's tone. It was like something was running out of time, such a feeling of impatience.

He corrected his sitting posture, and waited for Schnee's words.

"I didn't think it was a good idea to meet again immediately so I didn't talk about it yesterday, but the person I want you to meet is Girard."

"Girard huh?…No, wait, is it really Girard?"

Girard was the no. 3 support character of Shin. A High Beast. But, it was more than 500 years since the Dusk of the Majesty, it should be impossible to meet Girard.

"…Is he still alive?"

Although he was called a High Beast, he didn't have a long lifespan. Humans, Beasts, Dwarfs were said to live a long life if they lived for 100 years.

In contrast to these 3 races that have short lives, such races like Elves, Pixies, Dragnils and Lords were said to be a long-lived species.

Even though High Beasts and High Dwarfs were a superior race, still, it should be 150 years at most.

Although a beast's length of life depends on the animal which became the model, Girard's model was a relatively orthodox wolf among the choices. It wasn't a model for long living especially.

Certainly, he heard the thing about Girard becoming a king. However, because that was a fairly old story, Shin never thought that Girard was still alive.

"Yes. But…I think he has a few days left and it will not be that much longer anymore."

Schnee personally didn't know why Girard was still alive until today.

But she was certain about one thing.

"He too, was waiting for Shin."

As Schnee was, Girard also was waiting for Shin.

"He himself doesn't know how he could live this long. There is likely some meaning, since he is alive."

He didn't seem to feel too much fear from the approaching death either since his body should already be dead.

"Actually, even if there's no Girard, the alliance can continue functioning. The current beast king is the eighth generation, that not only has military power, but he also has the ability as a ruler."

Falnido Beast Alliance was formed by bundling up every beastman tribe. It was built by Girard during the confusion that struck the world.

And then, as for the first beast king, it was Shin's support character, a no. 3 of High Beast origin.

Girard Estaria.

The appearance that Shin remembered, when he was in a normal human form, was a man of about 40, characterized with an unkempt beard and brown hair that was trimmed short. Handsome men and beautiful women would be wretched, because this appearance of a wild middle-aged man was good. When Girard was fully armed, the charisma that was felt around him could be called a veteran warrior, Shin took pride at that time for not making a wrong choice.

When in combat, Girard went into werewolf mode, a figure that swooped down upon his prey, exactly like a hunter.

He specialized in close ranged combat and paired up with the no. 4 support character, Shibaid, a High Dragnil, to serve as an advance guard party. Although his offensive power from magic skills was low, it was compensated with agile movement, and perfected with hand-based martial arts skills. He could fight on par with Schnee, and would win under certain conditions.

The figure that used to strike his fist against enemies with a roar, was reproduced instantly in Shin's mind, as he remembered it properly.

"After hearing that, we can't afford not to go. Where is Girard's place?"

“When we exited from the Wraith Plains the other day, just go further north ahead instead. The alliance extends over the plains and forest area, it is next to a capital city that is said to be ruled by a human king. There are 4 big villages like the capital city, and the Girard is in the village of the dog clan where the current beast king is.”

‘I see. Although I heard it roughly, there is no danger before arriving there, right?”

“Yes, I think it will be safe for at least another several more years. Because the person in question has not weakened that much too.”

“Then, should I go normally?”

Shin was going to use his trump card for long-range transfer if he was really driven into a corner, but it somehow seemed to be all right.

“Then, because there are several things I want to check, let’s leave after I am finished. I have to be ready too, will both of you be alright for tomorrow?”

“I’m all right anytime~”

“I wonder if I’m good since I’ve always been the sort of ‘stay at home caretaker’.”

Shin asked Yuzuha and Tiera, who had taken the role of listener. Basically, Tiera was entrusted for house-watching because of Schnee always being away from home, and she thought she would do the same this time too.

“Tiera, you will also go this time.”

“Eh! Me too?”

Tiera was surprised to hear from Schnee that she was also going.

“Because Shin has returned, there’s no need to stick to this place anymore.”

“Yeah, it’s the strong point of owning a personal store.”

“Um, is it okay to leave this store alone?”

Schnee smiled wrily at Tiera’s question.

“No problem. Because he will carry it away.”

“Carry it…away?”

What did she say, Tiera had an expression of not understanding. Surely, there were few people who could understand immediately when Schnee said, “Carry the store.”

“I can take it. This store.”

“…Eto, what do you mean by that?”

It was understandable that Tiera couldn’t comprehend what Shin was trying to say. No matter how one looked at it, he couldn’t easily carry the store, was what she was probably thinking.

“Is it unusual now? To carry a store or a house?”

“It’s not nonexistent, but without an expert in that field, it would not be known. As far as I know, it needs quite a large sum of money to be attached even to a small hut.”

Although it was common technology during the game era, as usual, Shin didn’t know what happened under the present situation. When he heard about it from Schnee, he understood that it was treated like a special technique.

From seeing Tiera’s reaction, the production skills seemed to have suffered a steep decline.

“Indeed. Then, it’s only natural that Tiera doesn’t know about it, huh? Then, are arts more mainstream than skills now? Is the production system too?”

“Yes. The production system is also divided by arts and skills. After the Dusk of the Majesty, people tried to restore the skills, and from trial and error, arts were born. It’s the same as the combat system, where the effects are lower than a skill.”

“I knew it.”

If it was said in a game style, they were trying to reproduce the skill without the system assistance. Normally nothing would happen, but here was a different world. Perhaps, an effect, such as a portion of the skill was produced, and it was called arts. As for a blacksmith, because there were techniques that could never be reproduced by simple physical work, it must not be an ‘off the mark’ guess.

“Since the new generation, like me, thought arts were the standard, it’s deviated from Shin and Master by all means. Were people with the same class as Master common before the Dusk of the Majesty? I can’t imagine what kind of world that was.”

“Well it had its own way, but there were not many people who had the same class as Schnee, right?”

“Still, it can’t be counted with the number of fingers on both hands, don’t you agree? It was so beyond scary that I’m amazed from that time. Those kind of people fighting were heard everywhere, and how such a society was able to maintain itself in such situation.”

“In that situation, it was managed properly, and when a guy went too far they would get expelled.”

Malignant players were reported to GM’s and had their account deleted, but because he couldn’t say that, he got by with similar words. If there really was such a world, it ought to have perished a long time ago.

“How was it able to be managed?”

“That was because there were various people cooperating in that situation. Leaving that aside, what do you mean by a “new generation” that you said a while ago, Tiera?”

“Ah that matter? It’s simple. It is a ‘new generation’ for people who were born after the Dusk of the Majesty, a person who was born before the Dusk of the Majesty and is still alive is called the ‘old generation’. It was first said by someone when the country was founded after the Dusk of the Majesty, and lasted until now. Though I think as a new generation, I obviously feel inferior when I see Master and other older generations.”

As Tiera said, an old generation was certainly superior when looking at the ability.

Shin and Schnee were good examples. However, if the skill was excluded, it didn’t mean that the old generation was high in ability.

“There are gaps in ability between the different generations, but I’m not too conscious of differences between the old and new. However, I clearly feel the generation differences from Shin and Master.”

“Not generation differences!”

To tell the truth, a piece of the generation differences didn’t make sense to Shin.

“Such recognition is all right I guess.”

Since it was already established, there didn’t seem to be any harm or anything. Although it appears to have some exceptions.

“Let’s return to the talk that had derailed away for the time being. I said it a while ago here, but Tsuki no Hokora is a store that can be moved. Because of that, I intend for the two of you to act together. In addition, Tiera is able to go out without much trouble now and I thought it would be good to take a trip. Ah, of course there is a choice, do you want to stay?”

He wouldn’t force her, against her will, to come along with him. And there was no reason he must take Tsuki no Hokora with him.

“If that’s the case, I will follow you. Though I did go out from here several times, it was still a little scary for me to enter the kingdom yet. But I think it’s all right if it were with Shin and Master together.”

“It’s decided then.”

“Everyone will be together~!”

All of them nodded at Yuzuha’s remark.

“Let’s move for preparation immediately!”

In addition to Tiera and Schnee, they aimed to meet an old friend at Falnido Beast Alliance.

The anticipated reunion and parting, Shin has decided the destination.

What was waiting for them thereupon, no one knows.

◆◆◆◆

As she felt the morning light warming up her chest, Schnee woke up.

(Here is…)

She remembered yesterday’s event vaguely in her head. The things where Shin returned. The situation where Wilhelm and Rashia were surprised. The time when they sat down at the dining table in Tsuki no Hokora.

“If I’m not mistaken, I definitely put Tiera in my bed…Eh!!?”

As she muttered that, she noticed that there was somebody next to her. She was also holding somebody’s arm.

“EH? S-Shin!?”

She desperately suppressed the loud voice which came close to shouting. Schnee confirmed that it was her master’s arm that she had been holding.

The curly black hair. The deep black eyes under the closed eyelids, it was something that Schnee knew well.

That person was Shin, the master of Tsuki no Hokora.

“Huh!?”

The state of their bodies being so close and the sensation of their skin touching each other, caused Schnee’s face to turn red. Even she herself was aware of her ears turning bright red. She was aware that she had been last night.

However, she never thought that she would do something like step into Shin’s bed in a natural fashion while being drunk.

“W-What a blunder…”

While her face was flushed red, she reproached herself, since she never had the intention of releasing Shin’s arm.

When she got out of the bed without waking Shin up, she let out a small breath. The reason was that she didn’t know when Shin would wake up. If Shin was to wake now, she couldn’t come up with any excuses.

Somehow she restrained her desire of wanting to look at Shin’s sleeping face, and she left the room.

After changing her clothes in her own room, she washed her face and cleared her consciousness. She felt refreshed due to the cold water, and her reflection no longer showed her face flushed red from a little while ago.

“First of all, I will prepare breakfast.”

As for the time, it was only a little pass 5:30. Because she always finished tidying up before 7:00, this was pretty much her daily routine.

Schnee went to the kitchen, and as she looked at the fridge’s contents to decide the menu, Tiera came over.

“Ah, Master, good morning.”

“Good morning, you were quite drunk yesterday, are you okay now?”

“Uhh…I caused an inconvenience last night. For the time being, I have no hangover.”

Tiera seemed to remember, and she apologized while dropping her shoulders.

“Then, please help with the preparation for breakfast. Because it is likely that we will need to prepare portions for 4 people.”

“Yes…huh? For 4 people?”

“Well, just in case.”

“Ah, I see.”

Tiera seemed to have some doubts about the 4 people part, but she obediently wore the apron and began to help. Schnee also put on her favorite apron. Schnee’s was light blue, and Tiera’s was light green.

“What would you like for the menu this morning?”

“Let’s go with a Japanese-style meal. For other ingredient beside the miso soup, take out the treasured fish.”

“Huh!? Master, don’t tell me, it’s THAT?”

Tiera couldn’t hide her surprise due to Schnee words. That super high-quality ingredient was said to be worth a large amount of Jul white gold coins. The name of the ingredient was ‘Diamond Horse Mackerel’. The special food was opened and dried in the sun, and it was best to be used at this time. In other words, the breakfast at Tsuki no Hokora today was the dried and opened horse mackerel, and the miso soup which is a must in Japanese cuisine.

As for the Diamond Horse Mackerel, it was a fish type monster, like the horse mackerel, and had scales that shined like a diamond. However, regardless of its appearance, it boasted a strength level of 450 – 600. They were usually found in a school. It was a monster that ate low-level Krakens and a shark type monster that exceeded level 500 instead of normal bait. Only a few were caught, when they weakened and got lost from their school, and occasionally ended up in the market.

Among the food ingredients from the sea, it was recognized as a high-class food material with a tremendous price. What would happen if such a Diamond Horse Mackerel was processed with Schnee’s cooking skill? It was already needless to say.

“Though the mackerel has the appearance of a dried and opened fish, somehow it is sparkling.”

From the keen sense of an elf, Tiera seemed to caught the hidden life force in the horse mackerel.

“Now then, I will prepare the miso soup first. Tiera, please cook the rice.”

“Ah, yes.”

The fish which emitted the shine of a diamond was first put on a plate, and Schnee took out the ingredients for the miso soup. The ingredients were miso paste, wakame seaweed, and three kinds of fried tofu. It was said to be a classic style with Dashi[17] and dried bonito and kelp.

“Master, the rice is ready.”

Tiera who finished preparing quickly called out to her master. Because it was obvious she cooked her own meal when Schnee was away, Tiera too could prepare basic dishes. She didn’t need much time in preparation for cooking rice either. The magic stove was ignited, and the preparation was completed. In a few minutes, the aroma of the boiling soup stock from the miso began to fill the inside of the room. For Schnee, it was a smell she was very familiar with nowadays.

It was already past 6:00 at the time. It was time for breakfast soon.

Suddenly Tiera opened her mouth.

“Master, may I go outside for a moment?”

“Since the mackerel is almost roasted, try to make it brief.”

“Yes…I will return in about 10 minutes.”

Tiera excused herself from Schnee and headed toward the doorway of the store. What was Tiera going to do? Schnee knew and encouraged her. This was because Tiera needed to get over the final defense line with

[17] Japanese soup stock

her own power.
Tiera opened the door and went out. Then, the morning sunlight enveloped Tiera gently.

“This time, it’s still only a little chilly.”

Was it the remnant of the night? She felt the air was still cold with her thin clothes. Tiera then walked slowly toward the boundary of the magic barrier that was erected around Tsuki no Hokora.

“It’s alright…it’s alright…”

As she approached the boundary, Tiera felt her heart beating rapidly. Shin was together with her when she went out for the first time. And she was able to came forth alone on the second time around.

Still, the fear that lasted 100 years was cultivated and it wouldn’t disappear so easily. She might get attacked again by monsters if she went out. In addition, someone else might fall victim to it, again. That sort of unreasonable idea clung to her.

Schnee certainly noticed it, because she encouraged Tiera to keep at it.

While regaining her breath, Tiera advanced forward step by step. She already understood that there was nothing ahead. If there was experience, Tiera was able to advance beyond that.

She recalled the hand that Shin held out. In order to grasp that hand, Tiera stepped forward outside of the boundary.

“……”

She stayed in that place for about 1 minute, and confirmed that there was no change in the surroundings. While it may be true that she was outside of the boundary, there was nothing that abruptly appeared or anything unusual. However, she still felt that the air that surrounded her was unusual.

“…Phew. After all, I’m still nervous.”

Together with her voice, she entered the barrier again. Once again, this was obviously only for her to get used to the outside.

“Now then, let’s do this quickly.”

Aiming toward the corner of the trees that surround Tsuki no Hokora, Tiera began to walk. She move until there was grass that grew thickly, until about the height of Tiera’s waist, and went around sideways there.

A blooming flower with an appearance that was similar to a Cosmos flower, was in front of Tiera’s line of sight. Only its shape was similar, the flower’s petals were varied in manner, such as, red, blue, green, and purple.

The name of the flower was ‘Repika’. According to the elves belief, the flower has a meaning of gratitude and sincerity. When she was not yet able to come outside of the barrier, Tiera knew when it would bloom at this place in the current season. She didn’t look after the store for 100 years just for show. From the windows of the store, she looked casually at the blooming Repika.

Though she could see and not be able to touch it, those things were in the past now. She picked several flowers to decorate the dining table, and returned to the store.
“Flower vase, which flower vase~~”

“Have you become accustomed to it a little?”

Schnee called out to Tiera who was searching for a vase with a reasonable size.

“Somehow or another, though it is only a little.”

Tiera replied with a calm face, and Schnee had a gentle smile on her face. From her words, there was no sign of overdoing things.

“…It will be ready soon. Please go and wake Shin.”

“Understood.”

Schnnes’ smile deepened a little as she sent off Tiera. The figure of Tiera disappeared into the depth of the passage and after a while, a sound of something falling was heard by Schnee.

Before long, the appearance of Shin and Tiera turned up, and then a young girl with fox ears and silver hair.

Though Schnee was extremely embarrassed when she recalled that they laid in bed together last night, she managed to keep calm somehow. She just hoped that Shin would say nothing. On the corner of the table, in that little noisy situation, a Repika’s flower watched the scene.

~Volume 2 End~

Rionne Strail Bayreuth
19 years old. Human.
The second princess of Bayreuth Kingdom.
Carry a greatsword and the strongest warrior in the kingdom.
Rashia Luzel
22 years old. Beast.
Wilhelm's childhood friend and a convent's sister.
A Bird type girl with ears like the wings.
Tiera Lucent
157 years old. Elf.
A saleclerk of "General Store Tsuki no Hokora"
Black hair due to a strong curse.
Yuzuha
Unknown age. Element Tail.
A monster which was saved by Shin.
Has the appearance of a young fox, but hid an immeasurable power.
Schnee Raizar
521 years old. High Elf.
Shin's support character in the game era.
Protected Tiera who was cursed, for years.
Wilhelm Avis
22 years old. Lord.
An adventurer who wield a devil spear【Venom】.
Have a strong sense of justice contrary to his appearance and tone.
Millie
8 years old. Beast.
A type Tiger girl with the feature of tiger.
Lives in orphanage in the town.
Shin
Main character of this story.
21 years old. High Human.
Strongest player who renowned in online game.
After clearing the death game, he was transported to the game world 500 years later.

Name: Rashia Luzel
Gender: Female
Race: Beast

Main Job: Priest
Sub Job: None
Adventurer's Rank: None

Stats

LV:	151
HP:	2488
MP:	3023
STR:	147
VIT:	130
DEX:	174
AGI:	122
INT:	188
LUC:	68

Battle Equipment

Head:	None
Torso:	Second grade Priest clothes
Arm:	Bracelet of the Barrier(Damage block [Strong])
Feet:	Leather Boots
Accessories:	Prayer of Saint Sphere(Magic damage rise[Medium])
Weapon:	Priest's staff

Title

- None

Skills

- Heal
- Cure
- Purification

Other

- Sister affiliated with Church

Name: Rionne Strail Bayreuth

Gender: Female

Race: Human

Main Job: Dark Knight

Sub Job: None

Adventurer's Rank: None

Stats

LV:	230
HP:	5893
MP:	1288
STR:	559
VIT:	332
DEX:	298
AGI:	477
INT:	189
LUC:	58

Battle Equipment

Head:	Red Magic Thread of Hair Band(MP Bonus[Small])
Torso:	Small Dragon's Skin Armor(VIT Bonus[Weak], Fire resistant)
Arm:	Small Dragon's Armguard(STR Bonus [Weak])
Feet:	Small Dragon's Boots(AGI Bonus [Small], Wind resistant)
Accessories:	Red Crystal Earrings(Magic damage reduction[Small])
Weapon:	Holy Sword Muspelm(STR Bonus [Medium], Light bestowal, Self-restore durability[Small])

Title

- The Wielder of Holy Sword

Skills

- Full Moon Edge
- Cross Slash
- Spiral Edge
- Tyrant Beat
- Spirit Manipulation
  etc

Other

- The second princess of Bayreuth Kingdom

Name: Schnee Raizar

Gender: Female

Race: High Elf

Main Job:	Kunoichi
Sub Job:	Spirit Mage
Adventurer's Rank:	None
Affiliation Guild:	Rokuten

● Stats

LV:	255
HP:	8767
MP:	9223
STR:	807
VIT:	801
DEX:	855
AGI:	858
INT:	803
LUC:	89

● Battle Equipment

Head:	Moonlight Silver's Hair Clip(INT Bonus [Special], Sensory disturbance ineffective)
Torso:	Moonlight Silver's Maid Clothes: Specific for Tsuki no Hokora(VIT Bonus [Special], Stealth Bonus[Special])
Arm:	Moonlight Silver's Armguard(STR Bonus [Special], Magic damage reduction [Special])
Feet:	Moonlight Silver's Long Boots(AGI Bonus[Special], Restraint and Debuff invalidity)
Accessories:	Age of Gods Earring
Weapon:	Blue Moon【Ninja Katana】

● Title

- Pinnacle of Katana Technique
- Pinnacle of Dark Technique
- Pinnacle of Martial Art-Technique
- The Wielder of Magic Katana
- Blessing of the Soul

etc

● Skills

- Blade Breaker
- Mind's Eyes
- Sanctuary
- Lightning Bunker
- Wide Heal

etc

Other

- Acting Manager of Tsuki no Hokora
- Shin's Support Character No. 1

Name: **Lord Skull Face**

Race: **Undead**

Class: **Lord**

● Stats

LV:	804
HP:	?????
MP:	4890
STR:	806
VIT:	840
DEX:	787
AGI:	668
INT:	201
LUC	10

● Battle Equipment

Weapon: 6 body's arm

● Title

- Lord of Labyrinth

● Skills

- Summon Undead

Other

- A unique mutation monster

Name: Yuzuha

Gender: -

Race: Element Tail

Main Job: Alchemist

Sub Job: None

Adventurer's Rank: None

Stats

LV:	411
HP:	6893
MP:	7288
STR:	459
VIT:	432
DEX:	498
AGI:	522
INT:	536
LUC:	85

Battle Equipment(In human form)

Head:	None
Torso:	Priestess costume of Evil Clearance (Brainwash, Confusion, Disorder, Charm are invalid)
Arm:	None
Feet:	Socks of Refreshing Breeze(AGI bonus[Strong])
Weapon:	None

Title

- Ruler of the field
- King of Demon Fox
- Silver Evil Beast
- Sage of the Forest
- Demon Essence-Controller

etc

Skills

- Fox Fire
- Final Gun Wave
- Flare Volcano
- Ember Flame
- Storm Blast

etc

Other

- Shin's contract animal(Monster Partner)